DHARMA,

INDIA AND THE WORLD ORDER

TWENTY-ONE ESSAYS

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CHATURVEDI BADRINATH

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To Bishop Lesslie Newbigin
To whose friendship I owe much

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FOREWORD

1 am greatly honoured by my friend Chaturvedi Badrinath in his dedication of this work to me, and by the publisher in his request for a foreword. Badrinath and I have been engaged in intermittent discussions of a theological and philosophical nature for over twenty years, and although we continue to differ on fundamental matters, 1 have been both stimulated and enriched by these discussions and by the reading of his major work on *Dharma* which, regrettably, still remains unpublished.

There is a particular importance in this work for readers in the West and not only for readers in India. Two great civilizations, the Indian and the European, have developed through millennia with very little contact. But the British connection with India over the past four centuries has deeply affected both. And yet, in spite of these four centuries of close contact, it is Badrinath's thesis that the two have never really understood each other. In these four centuries, and especially in the past two, powerful western forces have invaded India, their effects reaching to the remotest villages. Christianity, liberalism, utilitarianism, Marxism, together with western science, technology and industrialization have been powerful factors throughout these centuries. And they came not by a process of mere osmosis, but as part of a deliberate effort of the British people to 'modernise' India, to bring India into the mainstream of what was taken to be the world civilization. This invasion has released powerful forces in Indian life, many of them manifesting themselves in violent forms. And yet India remains resolutely Indian. And so, in a neat reversal of Marx's thesis on Feuerbach, Badrinath remarks that the West has tried to change India, but the point is to understand it.

Ironically enough, misunderstanding has been multiplied by the fact that the leadership of Indian public life during the past century and a half has been trained in English, and English has been, until very recently, the main language of public life. Language inevitably provides the lenses through which one tries to see and describe the world, and the result has been that Indians have tried to understand Indian reality in terms of western concepts. Badrinath has an exceptionally wide and deep understanding of both Indian and Western thought, and is therefore able to move sure-footedly amid the tangled mass of confusion and misunderstanding which has characterized the attempts of both parties to understand themselves and each other.

Badrinath takes it to be a fact that the confidence which the West had in the certainty of its beliefs has now almost vanished. I agree with him, and 1 think that this collapse of western self-confidence is one of the very important elements in the present world scene. One of the consequences of this collapse is the growing number of natives of the West who turn to India in the hope of finding salvation. This turning may be seen not only in the huge numbers of young people from the West going to India for shorter or longer periods, but also in the growing number of western philosophers, scientists and theologians who are exploring Indian themes in their search for reliable truth. It may also be seen in the high-pressure commercial marketing of Indian gurus in the West, about which Badrinath has some caustic remarks to make. But if the West is once again seeking wisdom from the East, it is all the more important that the search should be conducted in the light of the realities and not of the myths. Here, 1 think, the wide learning and sharp discrimination which Badrinath commands, can be of real service both to India and to the West.

As words are tools for understanding, so also they can be potent instruments for confusion. Badrinath refers many times to three words which have had a prime role in confusing minds both in India and in

the West. The three are related to each other and their use mutually reinforces the confusion. The first of these words is *Hinduism.* There is not, and there has never been, any such thing. It is a word invented by invaders to describe what they wrongly took to be the religion of the people of the subcontinent. It is a word and a concept unknown to any ancient Indian writer. The second is the word *religion.* Indian thought, says Badrinath, has never acknowledged the existence of a thing called 'religion' a separate activity over against the whole of the life of the person and the society. And the third is the word *secular.* Like the other two, this word is also a foreign import. In the West it has a negative connotation: it refers to that which is against religion. But, says Badrinath, classical Indian understanding of the human condition was secular but not anti-religious.

The key concept which will enable us to grasp the truth about India and to unmask the confusions created by the other three words, is the concept of *Dharma.* Dharma is that which sustains life and order in all their forms, cosmic, human, animal and divine. It is a secular concept in the sense that it arises from no alleged divine revelation but from a study of the human person in all the dimensions of human existence (which are certainly not merely material). The concept of Dharma is not religious or anti-religious; it is secular. But, and here confusion begins to multiply even within India, the word Dharina has been used to embody the western concept of 'religion', and therefore secularity has been understood to be anti-Dharmic. But the confusion originates in the West, where the concept of 'religion' (from a Christian point of view a very suspect concept) was used to explain what the inyaders found in India.

How can Dharma be made intelligible to the western mind? That is the problem to which Badrinath addresses himself. Dharma is inexplicable in terms of Aristotelian logic for it denies the dominion of the principle of non-contradiction. Every statement made about Dharma must immediately be supplemented by its opposite if

misunderstanding is to be avoided. Aristotelian logic is exclusive. Dharma includes everything. It embraces the whole reality of what it is to be human (including its transcendent dimension) and therefore it is universal. Dharmic thought rejects all dualisms and embraces what Aristotelian logic calls contradictions as correlative elements in truth. To identify Dharma as 'religion' is therefore to fall into total confusion. Religions divide, as history has so tragically demonstrated and as the contemporary clash of religious fundamentalisms illustrates; but Dharma unites. It is therefore as universal as humanity is.

Badrinath claims that, in contrast to Western philosophy, Dharmic thought has no pre-suppositions. It analyses the empirical facts and draws the conclusions. It is rational but not rationalistic, empirical but not empiricist. Even the (almost) universal Indian belief in karma and reincarnation is not any sort of pre-supposition. It arises from 'an analysis of empirical reality' (p. 124). Dharmic thought is independent of any alleged divine revelation or any ancient tradition embodied in sacred scriptures. It takes as its only data the facts of human experience in all its vast and varied range. It does not apparently accept Einstein's dictum that what you call 'facts' depends on the theory that you bring to them.

Although Badrinath has a very clear understanding of the Christian tradition and of the Bible in particular (better in my opinion than that of some of my Christian friends) the main argument is posed in terms of the antagonism between Aristotelian and Dharmic thought. Badrinath does not -in his very wide-ranging survey examine the ways in which Aristotelian thought impinged on an early Christian theological tradition, especially in the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. At the former period one could say that a synthesis between the two was attempted, while from the seventeenth century onwards biblical categories of thought were more and more displaced by Aristotelian. Badrinath recognizes that the impact of the West upon India during the last two centuries has been primarily that of European

Enlightenment in its varied forms, so that it is understandable that he sees Aristotelian rather than biblical thought as the opponent with which Dharmic thought has to wrestle. Yet there are many respects which, as it seems to me, biblical thought is nearer to Dharmic than to Aristotelian. To take as an example only one of the dichotomies in Western thought which Badrinath regards as having central importance, that between theory and practice (p. 140), one has to point out that this dichotomy is a product of Aristotelian thought and quite foreign to the Bible.

At the heart of the encounter of Dharmic, Aristotelian and Christian ways of thinking is the question of certainty. Badrinath speaks of the passionate quest of the Indian sages for certainty. The European Enlightenment, especially in the work of Descartes, was concerned with the quest for certainty. The critical principle which has been so central to Western thought in the past three centuries was aimed at eliminating everything that could be doubted so as to bring to light the core of certain truth on which public life could be built. Until very recently there was a massive confidence in the western world that modem science provided certain truth by which public life could be directed. As Badrinath rightly says, that confidence has largely collapsed. There is a profound loss of nerve in the West and a profound embarrassment about the claims which were embodied in the colonial expansion of Europe during the recent centuries. Badrinath offers Dharmic thought as a basis for certainty-not with any arrogance but with the gesture of one who recognizes that in the global society we need to listen to each other.

But, in spite of Aristotle and the Enlightenment, there is a core of belief at the heart of western culture, a belief whose origins are biblical, that the human condition has to be understood as a story, a history. The Enlightenment tried to replace this with a pattern of timeless truths for which contingent events of history could not be proof. Marxism and the liberal doctrine of progress, both combined

Enlightenment elements with a story-like interpretation of the human condition. Marxism has collapsed. Liberal capitalism is at the moment in a triumphalist mood but the seeds of corruption and collapse are evident. The root difference, 1 think, between Western and Dharmic thought is at this point. If the human reality is to be understood as story, then absolute certainty belongs only to the end, and meanwhile we walk by faith because there is no other way. The dichotomy between reason and faith is seen to be absurd.

But this means that there are no certainties which all human beings must accept Dharmic thought looks for a balance in which opposites are held in tension and conflict is resolved. Biblical thought sees the human situation as one in which there is real conflict, in which decisions have to be made between alternatives, in which, therefore, 'balance' may be betrayal.

This book is therefore important, not only because it unravels the multiple misunderstandings which have confused and still confuse the relations between India and the West. It is important also because, from a nonwestern perspective but with a profound understanding of Western thought, it confronts us with the reality of the choices we have all to make as we face the disintegration and (perhaps) collapse of the western ways of thought which have dominated the world for so many centuries.

Lesslie Newbigin

PREFACE

Dharma is so evocative a word that many Indians see meanings in it which were perhaps never intended. Mr. Chaturvedi Badrinath's concern is with the original meaning of the word-the universal principles which hold things together. It is this concept which is also the central concern of the Centre for Policy Research. *Dharma* in that sense goes even beyond human rights and democracy.

When we find the existing paradigm is mostly Western inadequate to understand societies and the world itself, it is worthwhile to explore those central concepts which dominated an ancient and perhaps a wise civilisation which is called India.

The present volume is an effort to go into the relevance of thought such as *Dharma* which is at the core of understanding India-even of 1991. Hopefully Chaturvedi Badrinath's travails of the last two years, representing his preoccupation of perhaps three decades, will evoke an intellectual response which they richly deserve.

Centre for Policy Research **V A Pai Panandiker**
New Delhi **Director**
October 1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1 am thankful to the Editor of *The Times of India,* Mr.Dileep Padgaonkar, for inviting me to write for his newspaper a series of articles, to be published fortnightly, that would have a look at Indian society and the public policies that govern it, from a point several spaces removed from current events, from within the Indian traditions of understanding human life. That is what those eighteen articles seek to do-in a form, however, that would interest a larger audience than the community of scholars alone. I am thankful that on reading them many people from different parts of India wrote to me, saying that they had echoed their thoughts as well.

Dr.Vishwanath A.Pai Panandiker, Director, the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, republished those articles with the last three essays, in October 1992, in a limited edition of this book. I am deeply grateful to him.

Besides those whose help I have acknowledged at appropriate places in the book, 1 owe special thanks to:

Mr.L.P.Singh, Dr.Panandikar,Mr.Ramaswamy R. lyer, Mr. A.P. Venkateswaran, Dr. B.M. Bhatia, and Prof. Bashiruddin Ahmed, my colleagues at the Centre for Policy Research, for the stimulus and support of a continuing discussion on the concerns of this book.

Ms. Kusum Prasad, my colleague formerly in the Indian Administrative Service, her office being not far from the office of The *Times of India* in New Delhi, for arranging to have my essays delivered to the Editor, and insisting on reading them before they were sent off, which she did with a most encouraging enthusiasm.

During the course of my inquiry into the history of the Western encounter with Indian civilisation, reflected in the pages that follow, 1 have received intellectual and emotional support from many persons. I am indebted to:

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, to whom this book is dedicated, for pointing out, during our train journey from Birmingham to London in the winter of *1985,* the hidden spiritual dangers in the kind of inquiry that has occupied me, an inquiry into the human condition and into the sources of the disorders both of Indian and Western civilisations; m that process, he feared, I might come to believe that I myself am no part of the human condition, stand above it, and can assess its nature without being touched by any of the disorders of my own civilisation or that of the West: for his faith in the value of my work and his unceasing interest in it: for his emotional support all throughout: and for his friendship of many years, which has survived my regrettable resistance to writing letters.

The Homi Bhabha. Fellowships Council, Bombay, for electing me as a Homi Bhabha Fellow, 197*1-73,* with which my studies in the nature of Dharmic society systematically began.

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Countess Nora Harberstein, for arranging, in February *1985,* at her *salon* in Vienna, my talk on *Dharma* as universal human order, which created great interest.

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Dr. Hannelore Wiertz-Louven, and her husband Professor Erhard Louven, for their sustained interest in my work.

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The late Dr. Blanche Christine Olschak, the first European woman to travel in Tibet, 'with the seal of the Dalai Lama, wearing on my finger as a ring, as my inviolable security', as she told me, and the first woman to obtain a doctorate in Tibetology, for her great support to my inquiry into *Dharma* as world order: and, as in the case of Violet de Laszlo, for many moments of pure laughter, to which I owe more than I can express.

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Professor Herbert Pietschmann, Professor of Theoretical Physics, Vienna University, who shared with me, at Cortona and then at Vienna, in April 1991, my view that the logical framework of *either/or,* in which all Western thought is located, is too narrow a framework for understanding human reality, for showing how it is too

narrow a framework even for the present state of science: for his great interest in *Dharma* as a method of understanding and equally as living: and for sharing with me something of his own work on its epistemological side, which points to what he calls 'science beyond science'.

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Those many men and women in different parts of Europe, whom I cannot name here, who, sensing that *Dharma* is not another academic and intellectual noise, gave me the very great privilege of knowing their inner lives and the histories of their relationships, which enabled me to understand better first of all myself. I learned from them infinitely more than I ever could from the books I consulted in the libraries of Europe.

To those numerous men and women in Madras who, over a period of some twenty years, came to hear my lectures, which were mostly explorations, preparing the ground as it were, I owe a debt of gratitude. They encouraged me, by their responsive listening, to take my first steps towards understanding *Dharma* as universal human order.

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927 Defence Colony, Sector 17 **Chaturvedi Badrinath**
Gurgaon 122 001, Haryana
23 September 1992

TO THE READER

This is a collection of twenty-one essays of which the first seventeen were first published in all editions of *The Times of India* from November 1989 to September 1990. The eighteenth essay was published on 30 July 1991. The nineteenth essay, 'Max Weber's Wrong Understanding of Indian Civilization', was submitted to a conference of German and Indian Sociologists, held in New Delhi in March 1984, and was published two years later in *Recent Research on Max Weber's Studies of Hinduism,* edited by Professor Detlef Kantowsky, of the University of Constance.

The twentieth essay, 'Two Methods of Understanding: Western and Dharmic', was read at a conference of German and Indian philosophers, on the 'Basic Concepts of Eastern and Western Thinking: The Concept of Rationality', held at the Goethe Institute, Madras, on 5-8 March 199 1.

The first eighteen essays are reproduced here exactly as they were published in *The Times of India* excepting the sub-headings in their texts, which were anyway different in the different editions of that newspaper. The slight editorial changes that I have made, in the nineteenth essay, in the form in which the Sanskrit words were printed in the German publication, have been mentioned at the foot of the opening page of that essay. The references there, printed as in the original, are to Max Weber's *The Religion of India. The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale; Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958).

As an aid to the reader I have provided, on pages 3-17, an outline of the inquiry and the arguments in the twenty-one essays.

The date mentioned at the foot of the opening page of each essay is the date on which it was published in *The Times of India.*

If the inquiry of the kind undertaken here, which has profound social consequences, is to proceed further, it is essential that its method be as free of dispute as humanly possible; which will then provide, quite independent of any single perception or opinion, a commonly shared ground of human concerns. That is what I have endeavoured to do in this book: with what degree of success, it is for the reader to judge. But that there is a great need of an indisputable method of inquiry into the given social conditions of human life everywhere, this itself will remain unaffected by any individual success or failure to free oneself of the logical circularity of presupposition and proof.

The method must evolve from evident human facts, which means that it must begin with what they suggest. It is notorious, of course, how from the same set of facts very diverse conclusions can be drawn. It is also true that human facts conceal much that is a part of their nature but which is not evident at all; and what they point towards, has been perceived differently in different systems of thought. We should ask whether that is because presuppositions intervene and that is the reason why perceptions and conduct differ so very substantially, often violently, between one society and another, and quite as much within the same person at different times of his or her life.

For example, a social system that is rooted, in the assumption that wealth is evil, and that those who are rich are monsters, will have a system of regulations that will differ violently from the one which begins with the presupposition that money, wealth, is the greatest human good, and that those who are rich are verily gods, and the poor are also monsters. Even if the division be not quite as absolute, the

general character of the two systems may still largely be one or the other. There is, in contrast, a third method, which is what was generally followed in traditional India. It was the method of demonstrating that neither of the two presuppositions about wealth is true; that each does violence to human reality, for neither is suggested by human facts themselves; that money, wealth, is neither evil, nor the greatest good, but simply an essential attribute of human living: whether wealth produces order or disorder, happiness or unhappiness, will depend on one's attitude towards it. What that attitude should be, for a sane life and society, is suggested by the nature of desire and wealth; that is, if they are understood without any presuppositions. Traditional economic thought of Indian civilisation has been, therefore, of a different character from what it has come to be in the modem West. For that reason the regulation of wealth in traditional India and the West has differed very substantially in its principles and scope.

This is true also of the other differences of polity in the different societies of the world, which clearly arise from the kind of presuppositions each has concerning sex, collective memories, history, space and time, law, authority, power, and the ends of life. They have kept changing in. the same measure as those presuppositions have changed. Hence the changes,often radical, in the regulation of sexual relations, for example. And yet, as in the regulation of wealth, the changes in the regulation of sex, authority, and power, have tended to alternate between two extremes-of the total control of the individual or his or her total freedom, subject only to the same freedom for others.

Thus, every form of government is based on some political philosophy; and every political philosophy has as its foundation a certain view of man and of society. The constitution of every modem western nation, when it is written, speaks of a certain concept of man as a fundamental postulate from which everything else is then derived.

Every such postulate is itself a product of a certain method of understanding the human condition. When social conditions are sought to be changed, what are changed in the first place are those postulates, which leads either to a reform of the social and political institutions, or to their uprooting by way of revolution. But if the new understanding of social conditions remains in the same intellectual framework as the earlier one; then, reform or revolution, it can only replace one set of disorder with another that will soon arise. The history of liberal individualism and of Marxism, or scientific socialism, proves this beyond doubt.

What the history of modem India proves is that, when a set of presuppositions that are a product of another history are made the foundation of public policies of another society with a different history, then the disorders of one are brought also to the other. The belief that the self-correcting devices of the one will operate equally in the other, is based on the presupposition that there are fixed universal laws of history, which has been proved to be false. There have been, in any event, fierce disputes as to what those laws are.

The twenty essays are followed by a detailed review of the modem Indian perceptions of India that formed the basis of the social, economic and political changes in Indian society. It revolves around four questions. *One:* how was Indian society perceived, its past and present? Two: how did the Indian thinkers perceive British society and the civilisation of the West? *Three:* what principles of social reconstruction were they appealing to? Four: what was their vision of future India? The underlying question is about the nature of the intellectual framework in which they arose. That is to say, the main question is about the method of understanding, with which the twentieth essay is concerned. Some main conclusions that can be drawn with that review as a basis are mentioned on pages 318-28. They show how the Western misconceptions of India became also the Indian misconceptions of India, leading to much disorder.

The main argument that is advanced in the twenty-one essays is *this. Dharma,* both as a method of understanding and actual living, in relation with oneself and with others, the two being inseparable, does no violence to human nature, and leads to political perspectives that are altogether free from presuppositions of one kind or another as regards the human condition. It provides conditions of human freedom which are not a political and economic counterfeit.For it leads to a view of human life and relationships where nothing that is human is denied, but everything that is human is yet transcended. The transcending of one's condition is something neither esoteric nor mysterious. It takes place in actual fact all the time. That explains how, beyond one's own history, and beyond the history of one's society, one reaches out to others in a movement of true universal responsibility.

AN OUTLINE OF THE INQUIRY AND ARGUMENTS IN THE TWENTY-ONE ESSAYS

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IN THE TWENTY-ONE ESSAYS

Essay 1. The true identity of Indian civilisation has been dharmic and not ‘Hindu'. The word ‘Hindu' itself is not to be found in any of the ancient or medieval Indian texts. Nor was there ever any such thing as 'Hinduism'. The one concern from which everything in Indian thought flowed, and on which every movement of life ultimately depended, is *dharma,* order. Not any positivistic order but the order that is inherent in all.

Dharma means that whereby whatever lives, is sustained, upheld, supported. It is a secular view of life, not a 'religious' one; but it is not secularism either. It cuts across the religious- secular polarity of Western thought. One *dharmic* principle: every being has a right to live, and every individual the right to order his or her life according to his or her given temperament, capacity and circumstance.

Essay 2. There is increasing violence to the individual everywhere in the world, greater intolerance and a shrinking capacity to listen to the voices of others. In the West, almost a total collapse of all certainties, when certainties had been a characteristic feature of the European mind. What is being questioned, most of all, is whether there can ever exist any one world view, or faith, or rationality, from which all individuals can derive a shared meaning.

What is played out is that method of looking at man and the world which, by its very logic, fragments what in actual reality is unified. The Western reflections on life are firmly rooted in the method of *either or for* or the law of the excluded middle.

Dharmic thought saw this method as too narrow a logical framework to account for the manysidedness of life and its diversity.

It acknowledges human life as being composed of opposites, neither of which can be denied, or suppressed, without inviting untruth and disorder. The world is searching, for a new understanding of human freedom. That search is a search of *dharma.* The aims of *dharma* summarised.

Essay 3. Reformers have so far tried to *change* India; the point, however, is first to *understand* India.

There are some special difficulties, though, in that regard. One of them is that, because Indian thinkers saw human reality as immensely varied and complex, finding its expressions at different levels of consciousness, they saw the human condition with many eyes and spoke about it with many tongues. This puts a severe pressure not only on language but on human patience as well. The alternative is far less strenuous but thoroughly misleading. Other difficulties recounted. The Dharmic quest was more for completeness than perfection.

Essay 4. At the very heart of *dharma* in the contexts of law and politics, is the question concerning political power, *bala,* its sources, the manner of its use, the limits on its exercise, and the legitimacy of revolt against it.

The two chief concerns of Dharmic India were: to set limits to authority; and to provide to the individual the conditions of freedom and liberty in which each person may develop the potential of his or her being, subject to the same freedom for others. The *Arthasastra* and the *Mahabharata* recalled.

Preservation of social order and welfare of the people, *loka-samgraha,* must ever be the standard in politics, and to it everything else subordinate. Whatever is against the people, *loka-viruddha, is adharma;* whatever is conducive to their welfare, is *dharma.* The king is subject to *dharma.* Sovereignty is of *dharma,* not of the king.

Above all,paying scrupulous attention to the ordering of society, and to the problems that any form of organisation must lead to.Dharmic political thought remains firmly rooted in a unified concept of life where politics is not separated from *dharma.* Secular in their character, and universal in their sweep, Indian political principles are not isolated or severed from other human concerns.

Essay 5. The Dharmic culture, like the Chinese, attached utmost importance to the proper use of words which, if used carelessly, must invoke wrong things, create wrong perceptions and bring about false consciousness. The use of the word 'religion' in relation to Indian civilisation has had that effect in modern India, leading to much conflict and disorder.

Dharma is not 'religion'. Indian civilisation is not 'religious'. Religion is by its nature divisive: *dharma* unites. A religion excludes all that it is not: *dharma* includes every form of life. Religion *must* be separated from politics, as it has been in the modem West, for a sane world: every shade of political thought and practice that is sane must necessarily have its basis in *dharma.*

Essay 6. One of the important issues over which there was a vigorous debate in the history of Indian philosophical systems concerned the status of authority, either of scriptures or of persons, as a means of knowledge, *pramana.*

The position of traditional thought has been that mere authority could not be the criterion of truth, though testimony from authority as one of the means to valid knowledge was not discounted.

How, and when, does the *guru* become the main door to truth? The sense and nonsense of the *'guru'* concept analysed.

Essays 7-10. Conflict in human relationships, and what one has also within oneself, has been the chief concern of traditional Indian thought, of the *Mahabharata* above all. These four articles go into that question.

7 One evident feature of all Indian thought has been that every inquiry into the human condition begins with the common facts of human life. Conflict is one of them; it flows into many channels.

The *Mahabharata,* in taking up the pursuit of wealth and sexual pleasure as the two dominant facts of life, takes as one of its central methods, the fact of self-interest, *svartha,* as the spring of all human actions, and therefore of most human conflicts.

It demonstrates that most people have, however, an exceedingly limited view of self-interest; and must, for that reason, live in a state of conflict; for their interests, wrongly perceived, would then keep colliding with the interests of others. There is in human relationships conflict and violence not because of the absence of selfless love, but because there is not in them even serious and strong self-love. If there were, it would lead one in two related directions.

8 The problem of conflict lies less in a conflict itself and more in the means that are adopted to resolve it. These are based on a whole lot of presuppositions which are open to question.

Those very presuppositions that were invoked to end oppression, and therefore revolt and conflict, such as the will of God, purpose in history, supremacy of reason, the ends of equality and justice, the pleasure principle, or the principle of utility, created much deeper conflicts than the ones they set out to resolve. This is true of Christianity, Marxism, and Islam.

By what other means can self-conflict be resolved and self-division overcome? Is there a common ground where, free of presuppositions, we can find shared methods, not doctrines, of struggling with the problem of conflict? I suggest that there is. It is provided by *dharma.*

9 The Dharmic method of dealing with human conflicts is centred in the awareness that if conflicts arise from one's relationship with one's self and with others, then their resolution must also arise from that very relationship, for no human being can be perpetually at war with

himself or with others. In essence the Dharmic method of reconciliation is a method of respecting limits.

10 A universal method of reconciliation, and of the consequent freedom from fear, fear of one's self, and fear of the other, is suggested in the short parable of the three *da's* in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad: damyata, dana,* and *dayadhvam,* that is, self-control; sharing, and compassion. Self-control is not the negation of pleasure. Rather, pleasure is possible only with self-control.

Essays 11-15. These five deal with the problem of regionalism, nationalism, and the world. The question is: must one negate the other? The Dharmic perspective on these is analysed.

11 The question of human identity has exercised upon the human mind a most potent force. **But the underlying** issue has to this day remained inconclusive as much in the politics as in the various theories of identity. The idea of 'nation', or 'nation-state, makes no major difference to the problem of human identity itself, the problem is only transferred to another collective entity.

The resolution of that problems requires another prior value as regards human personality, which is a great deal more than the identity which the group, the nation, and the state seek to give to the individual. What that prior value is, or whether there is such a thing at all, has been, however, itself a subject of seriously conflicting views.

In the rich history of Western political thought there is little that is capable of resolving the problem of human identity either in principle or in practice without maintaining that the problem itself is misconceived, or dispersing it altogether.

Given the highly centralised bureaucracies of the church and the state, with their unwavering belief in the truth of their own perceptions of human life as the only truth about it, suppressing the diversity of faith and living, there is every reason why the regionalist revolt should have taken place in Europe and in the Soviet Union. Region in conflict

with the nation, the nation in conflict with the world, and the individual in conflict with the state, are inherent in the logic of 1 Western political thought.

In contrast, rooted in the deepest respect for the diversity of life, with no central orthodoxy, with independent traditions of regions adding in different was to all that has been magnificent in India, Indian society offers no ground, historical or psychological, for the violence of regionalism in this country.Why has it, then, come about in the Punjab, Kashmir and Assam?

12 Every form of government is based on some political philosophy, which has as its foundation a certain view of man and society. That has a logic of its own, relentlessly at work, in ways that are sometimes clear and at other times hidden.

The constitution of every modem Western nation, when it is written, speaks of a certain concept of man as a fundamental postulate. But that is far from settling the question of identity.

The rise of nationalism has replaced the question, 'who am I?, with the question, 'who *are* we?'. This leads to untruth, and then to hostility against those that are not us. Despite so much talk of the equality of all men, of human freedom and dignity, and of human rights, it is precisely these that have been most jeopardised in the history of the modem West. Albert Camus's analysis of the phenomenon recalled.

The problem of injustice, and of the revolt against it, cannot be solved by a constitution alone.

Dharma, as a unified view of the relation of one being with another, provides a different framework.

13 The underlying issue is the same today as it was in the past-the paradoxical nature of the relationship which the individual has with himself or herself and with others. The issue has been between the

need for security and the necessity of freedom. But does one have to be traded for the other?

Sri Aurobindo's analysis of the relation between the individual and society, nation and the state recounted, which clears the ground to discover afresh the Dharmic answers concerning this issue.

14 There is, according to traditional Indian thought, both a. *belonging* to and inner *independence.* There is in principle no conflict between the individual and society; the two together form an integral unity.

Even a plain reading of the text of the *Mahabharata,* its *Vanaparva* in particular, and its manifest structure, will make indisputably clear at least four characteristics of that sense of *belonging* which have for centuries bound together the diverse peoples of India.

One: the belonging was not primarily in political terms, or in terms of some religion.

Nor, two, was the belonging generated from the possession of a common territory; the belonging was not merely 'national'.

Three: the belonging arose from the myths and parables that were linked with the mountains, hills, rivers, lakes, trees and woods and forests.Geography, not an inert and frightening mass of nature, was invested with meaning, and brought into intimate relation with the everyday life of the people.

The conclusion of every myth in the *Mahabharata is* a profoundly ethical and universal idea concerning man. The national, in Dharmic thought, has meaning only in reaching out to the universal.

But that reaching out, paradoxically, has always been through the diversity of India's regional life. That is the *fourth* distinguishing feature of the Indian sense of belonging to a common civilisation.

Diversity is not the enemy of unity.

But the assumptions which were made the foundation of the Indian republic, whether of individual liberalism or socialism, measured

human life in proportions, of time and space, that were wholly different from those of Dharmic civilisation, where there is nothing that is wholly separate from the rest, nor is there anything that is wholly one with the rest, separate but inter-connected. The result has been a visible wide division between the political perceptions that govern the people of India and the values that govern their lives and relationships. This has led to confusion and violence.

15 The concept of identity implies neither separation from, nor opposition to, anything. But that is precisely what it has come to mean.

A wrong understanding has its logic which works itself out. If I understand myself with reference to what 1 am not, and with reference to that alone, then I have set up already a negative logic. Separation must lead to fear, fear to distrust, distrust to division, division to hostility, hostility to violence.

The most characteristic part of Dharmic civilisation has been, and can be seen in the lives of a countless number of men and women, that one's identity did not at all imply a separation from, or opposition to, something other. The creation of Pakistan was on the basis that it did. That a space created out of a negative logic must ever be a space not of self-fulfilment but of hostility to what one has separated from, is proved by the fact that within forty years, India and Pakistan were at war with each other three times.

The underlying substance of the whole debate about region, nation and the world, is all about the relationship between the individual space and social space, the space of one's inner being and the space of the world. The definition of right relationship is one of balance. Dharmic thought seeks the balance between the two. Through successive stages of perception, they come to be seen what they areone indivisible reality. A most powerful symbolical representation of

this view of man and the world is seen in the architecture of the temples in Tamil Nadu.

Translated into social and political terms, this means that without the inner balance in the individual, any political space created as an outward instrument, of identity, must generate unbalance of every kind. That that is what it almost always does is witnessed by history.

Dharma as law is the way of achieving balance between the inner space of the individual and the outer space of society.

It leads to a common ethical ground of one man's relationship with another; the abiding elements of it are *maitri,* friendship, and *karuna,* compassion. It does not matter whether you reach it from the side of Vedanta, or from the side of Buddhism, or from any other side.

Essay 16. Behind every political ideology, every policy and act of government, every economic principle and activity, lies the question of their truth. And since every civilisation has a particular understanding of truth, the question as to what truth is becomes of greatest importance.

It was in Dharrnic civilisation more than in any other that the question, 'what is truth?', was discussed in very great detail, and nowhere more than in the *Mahabharata.* It leads chiefly to three points, *First,* that truth is the highest of all *dharmas: secondly,* truth is relative to time and place, *desa* and *kala,* and the person concerned: and*thirdly,* truth is not just correspondence with facts but an actual living--of a life that is not fragmented in unrelated parts, but is lived in the wholeness of one's right relationship with oneself and one's right relationship with other beings. Truth is not a *knowing* alone, but also a *living.*

If truth were a function of time and place, then, like them, truth must forever be shifting. In that case, history, and not truth, should have been the *dharmic* apotheosis. The problem analysed.

The position of the *Mahabharata is:* truth is reverence for life. Truth is indivisible. And, in its essence, so is *dharma.*

Once that is understood, then Bhishma's advocacy of the relativistic nature of truth would not seem at variance with his own last words-'Exert in truth, for truth is the greatest force'.

Essay 17. Plausibility is almost always the enemy of truth.

There is hardly any public document of very recent times in India that illustrates this better, but tragically, than the report of the Mandal Commission, instituted to look into the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes, and recommend steps for their improvement. The issue that was of the greatest moment to it, was: whether the backwardness of certain classes of the Indian people was owing directly to the Hindu caste system, or there might be other causes of it, the generally poor economic conditions of the people, for instance.The Mandal Commission firmly concluded the former and not the latter was the case.

Its recommendation, among others, that 27% of all public appointments in the Central government, and in other institutions managed by it, be reserved for the citizens on the basis of their low caste as backward classes, became law in December 1990, leading to riots and much violence, during which many young people immolated themselves, among them a girl twelve years old. Later the Supreme Court stayed the operation of that law.

The Commission's report was based on certain assumptions about Indian social history. The first of those being that castes, the building bricks of Hindu social structure, fragmented the social consciousness of Hindu society by dividing it into numerous groups arranged in a hierarchical order on the basis of birth.

In this the Commission resurrected an exact argument of British rule, and also resurrected, word for word, the early British missionary denunciation of Indian society. It resurrected, too, implicitly, the

dispute between Gandhi and Ambedkar as regards the philosophy of *varna,* a dispute that was wrongly formulated anyway.

Ambedkar said: 'The best of men cannot be moral if the basis of relationship between them and their fellows is fundamentally a wrong relationship'. This is the Dharmic truth. The way the caste system began to develop, even in the times of the *Mahabharata,* was *a dharma,* disorder. That remained the unequivocal Dharmic position throughout, in the *Mahabharata* most of all, and later through Buddhism and the *bhakti* saints.

The Mandal Commission's report was based on selective history and selective texts. The plausibility of its assumptions conceals their untruth.

A steadfast refusal to inquire what the Dharmic ideals of human relationships have been and to correct the disorders of today in that light, a refusal that is manifest in the Mandal report, and nearly as much in the modem scholarship relating to India, can only produce errors of perception, and then suffering.

Essay 18. And what is the truth of Indian nationalism?

'Nation' and 'nationalism' have formed one most central problem of modem India. The British maintained, historians and rulers alike, that India was never one nation but a conglomeration of vastly different peoples. The Indian response to this forms the largest part of the conflicting Indian perceptions of India. In fact it turned into *the* debate of the colonial days. Both the past and the future of India were being perceived, as we will see in the last essay, in the light of the Indian answers to the British thesis. For those who readily agreed with that thesis, Gopal Krishna Gokhale the most eminent among them, India was 'a nation in the making'---of course 'under the civilising influence of the British', as he saw it. For those who rejected that thesis, mainly in the Hindu stream, and for the M.N. Roy of 1918, India was a nation centuries before England was one.

Both obscure alike the radically different nature of that sense of *belonging* that had bound the people of India together, as it does today.

Here is another example of how a false universe of discourse is set up by the wrong application of Western definitions to Indian society, 'nation' and 'nationalism' in this case. Given those definitions, and the perceptions they created, far removed from traditional Indian thinking on these matters, there must arise discord, conflict, and violence.

Even in the West, nationalism becomes a dominant passion only in the nineteenth century, in opposition to the Enlightenment view of history. That passion is introduced into India artificially. In a civilisation that did not even know the word 'Hindu', Hindu nationalism arises; and then the demand for Pakistan. If the truth of Hindu nationalism is assumed, then the demand for Pakistan could not be denied. It was a logical culmination, even before it was an emotional culmination, of the false doctrine of Hindu nationalism.

Essay 19. There are two different ways in which Max Weber's work on India may be discussed. One may ignore the larger framework of his studies of which it was a part, examine on their own grounds the numerous single conclusions he reached regarding the character of the social and religious institutions of Indian society, and show those conclusions to be either right or wrong, but without tracing them to his central presuppositions concerning India. This, as far as I know, is the method that has generally been followed by those in India who have responded to Weber. In such a method one may dispute the truth of any or all of his single conclusions and still keep his presuppositions as they were. It ends, at best, on a note of debate and does not advance the understanding of Indian culture.

Or one may show how Max Weber did not do what he set out to do in the first place, that is, to investigate the religious factors in

India that prevented the growth of rational capitalism which the Protestant ethic had helped develop in the modem West; examine his work irrespective of that question, for that work had anyway turned into an independent examination of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism; and then demonstrate how from the start it suffered from a most crippling error, so that the question really is less that of the truth or falsehood of, his single conclusions, and more that of the truth or falsehood of the very presuppositions with which he viewed India, given which, the rest logically followed. This is what I propose to do. In this way it is possible to admire his many insights into India but show that they were all covered, however, with his mistaken general view of India.

And if I am right, it follows that not until those presuppositions are given up completely, can there be any hope of understanding Indian civilisation.

To do that is not to devalue Weber's perception of India wholesale, but to clear the ground to see that all single definite statements about Indian culture will, unless they are balanced by their opposites, remain incomplete, and therefore misleading. And that is because ancient Indians had seen human reality manifest at so many different levels that they had naturally also acquired the most lucid habit of seeing with many eyes and speaking with many tongues.

Essay 20. India and the West have a history of shared ethical and philosophical concerns about the human condition. Those concerns bind them together in a common quest. But that history carried within itself a fundamental conflict between the idea of rationality as propagated vigorously by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, the roots of which lie in the Aristotelian logic, and the idea of it that runs like a connecting thread in the whole of Indian thought, and no less in Indian life. Those are wholly divergent views of rationality and truth;

and if we take into account the intellectual climate in which they arose, irreconcilable.

The conflict has been between two different rationalities as two different methods of perceiving human reality. One was chiefly derived from the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle, the characteristic Western logical framework of *either/or;* the other from the view that the opposites are combined as inherent nature of everything.

When the rationality of the Enlightenment became an ism, the ideology of rationalism,it turned into a conflict between two different ways of ordering human relationships. Every difference in the understanding of human existence, of life itself,that separates Indian civilisation from the Western arises, in the first place, from two very different methods of inquiry into the human condition.

But can the questions about the human condition be answered afresh without first breaking the traditional mould of understanding in which they were hitherto settled? And can a mould of understanding, in which the very life of a civilisation is cast, be replaced by another way of understanding, especially when the latter requires a most thorough recast not of the prevalent conceptions of life alone, but first of the method that leads to them? If it can be, then that can be achieved not by rational will alone but by a radical shift to a conception of life in which knowledge is integrated with the ethical, and cognition with responsibility. It will then have to be a radical conversion not only of an individual's whole being but of a whole civilisation as well. .

Essay 21. This is a review of modern Indian perceptions of India and the West. Some main conclusions follow from this study. They end with a question. That the others can misunderstand you is too well known. That you can misunderstand your own self is seldom recognised. Of the two, which is more harmful?

TWENTY-ONE ESSAYS

1

HINDUS AND HINDUISM

Wrong Labels Given By Foreigners

Delivered on 11 November 1989

In India, invading foreigners created for their own understanding, which turned out to be wrong, a set of words to describe a people and a world view that was alien and incomprehensible to them. Adopted carelessly in course of time by the native people, too, they allowed those words to give them an identity that was the very opposite of the identity their own traditions had given them.

In modem times the assumptions have been that there is something called Hinduism, that Hinduism is the national form of Indian religion, that Indian civilisation is Hindu civilisation, that in all its movements it is primarily religious and, its chief direction being other wordly, that it is radically world-denying. Each one of them is a huge misconception.

The notion that Indian civilisation is Hindu civilisation carried within itself already a reversal of the main direction of Indian thought, which flowed from one centre-the concept of *dharma. Of* all the consequences that gradually followed, three merit mention here.

First, whereas in all its movements the evident concern *of* Indian civilisation was with the human condition, it now came to be portrayed as a 'religion' *of* the people called Hindus and, therefore, something limited-one religion among others.

Secondly, essentially secular in their nature, and demonstrably universal, the ancient Indian perceptions *of* the human condition now came to be seen as a particular form *of* theodicy (meaning vindication

of divine providence in view of existence of evil). Since that theodicy was seen as 'Hindu', and 'Hindus' as a majority, it followed that any group that did not accept the elements of Hindu theodicy was then a minority, and a religious minority at that.

Starting with a wrong premise that Hinduism is the religion of the majority of India, which was not resisted, the British soon worked out. its political implications which were uncritically accepted by persons like Gopalakrishna Gokhale. The notion of 'minority' was thus firmly established in a society where, the concern always being with the universal order enfolding human destiny, the question of 'majority' and 'minority' quite simply did not exist.

Once established, an altogether new kind of conflict was brought into being, between 'majority' and 'minority', and for numerical reasons alone. Psychologically, it tended to degrade both alike. It is to these reversals, which took some time to manifest themselves, that most of the social violence and disorder in modem India can directly be traced.

If it were true that Indian civilisation was Hindu civilisation, would it not be a legitimate question for Indian Muslims to ask: 'Have we made no contributions to the making of civilisation in India?' The Indian Christians of Mar Thoma can legitimately ask a similar question. Muslims have been an integral part of India for eight centuries, and the Syrian Christians, who are also the most ancient Christians of the world, for nearly nineteen centuries. How will such a question be answered? Moreover, the Buddhists and the Jains are not Hindus, and the Sikhs now assert that they are not Hindus. The excruciating irony of it all is that those who are called 'Hindus' are not Hindus either.

The true identity of Indian civilisation has been *dharmic* and not 'Hindu'. The word 'Hindu' itself is not to be found in any of the ancient or even medieval Indian texts. That word was coined perhaps for the first time by the invading Arabs in *circa* eighth century A.D.,

and then it was clearly a geographical description of those who lived beyond the river Sindhu or Indus, and carried with it no religious connotation.

Nor was there ever any such thing as 'Hinduism'. Conditioned by the concept of 'religion', and in search of a unified system of religious beliefs amongst the people they called 'Hindus', which they would now endeavour to replace with Catholicism, the Catholic missionaries of the 16th century manufactured the word 'Hinduism'. If Western scholars and missionaries found it painfully difficult to define 'Hinduism', it was because a common name was sought for the maddening diversity of faiths and living in India. There has thus been a double error of identity, first in gathering the diverse faiths, beliefs and practices under a fictitious 'Hinduism', then in taking that to be a 'religion'. This error still persists.

When I raised this issue with Sri Jayendra Saraswati, the Sankaracharya of Kanchi, he said: "I agree that the words 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' are not our words. But they have been in usage now for a very long time and cannot be abandoned overnight, without inviting confusion. The concept of *dharma* is undoubtedly central, and I have been emphasising that myself, but the common people, the masses, now call their religion as Hindu *dharma".*

The question is whether the use of the words 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' has also altered our self-perceptions today, to a degree that our organised political life is artificially fragmented, breaking away from the wholeness of life, and has therefore led to the mindless violence witnessed today.

The question does not pertain to semantics; it is related to the abiding substance of Indian civilisation, *dharma,* from which we have moved away just at a time when we need it the most.

The word 'secular' itself has been misunderstood and much abused in India, conveying either an attitude of anti-religion or nothing deeper than equal respect for all religions. The first attitude has been as

mindless as the second has been somewhat insincere. Indian culture was essentially secular in the sense that its views of the world were derived not from anything outside the world but from the inherent nature of man, which carried within itself both immortality and death, and the human privilege to choose the one or the other. The concept of *dharma* was indisputably a secular view of life, not a 'religious' one.

Dharma in fact cuts across the very polarity, religious-secular, which had affected the history of the modem West so deeply, and affects it even today.

That *Dharma* was a secular order, and not any order derived from the revelation or commandment of God, or from any theological doctrine, can be further seen by the numerous references to what its embodiments are. The *Mahabharata* speaks of ten embodiments of *dharma:* good name, truth, self-control, cleanness of mind and body, simplicity, endurance, resoluteness of character, giving and sharing, austerities and continence. And there are five ways to the order in which our being is firmly grounded: non-violence, an attitude of equality, peace and tranquillity, lack of aggression and cruelty, and absence of envy. While each individual has a relation to himself, he has relationships with others. In the *dharmic* view the two are not separate. It is only when our relationship with ourselves is fight, that our relationship with the other can be right: and it is not until we achieve a right relation with the other, that our relation with ourselves can be right.

Thus the one concern from which everything in Indian thought flowed, and on which every movement of life ultimately depended, was the idea of *dharma,* order, which was not any positive order but the order that was inherent in all life. Derived from the Sanskrit root word *dhr,* 'to support', 'to sustain', *dharma* means that whereby whatever lives, is sustained, upheld, supported.

The least that is involved in any realistic conception of order is the condition that there be room in it for every expression of individual

development, provided the general flow of social life was not disrupted either by the anarchy of ideas or by the, anarchy of individual desires.

The immense importance attached to non-violence, *ahimsa,* as the essential condition of order, weaving it into the daily acts of the individual, only reflected the *dharmic* principle that every being has a fight to live, and every individual the right to order his life according to his given temperament, capacity and circumstances. When either of these two basic conditions is disregarded, in the name of religious faith or political ideology, there will only be *adharma,* disorder and violence.

2

SEARCH FOR DHARMA

Problems Stemming from Travesties

Delivered on 9 December 1989

There is as much in India as elsewhere in the world increasing violence to the individual which, on first sight, would suggest a fast deterioration in the ethical order, *dharma,* that sustains all life. The increasing sophistication in science and technology has visibly helped expand human living, but has also put in the hands of man vast technical resources to be able to bring immeasurably greater destruction and suffering than witnessed in human history ever before.

Increasing wealth in one part of the world is matched only by increasing poverty in another. The people of the world have been brought closer in terms of space and time; there is greater knowledge of the history that has moulded the life of different societies. But these have not brought a correspondingly greater understanding among the peoples, nor always a feeling of a common human bond. On the contrary, there seems to be in the world today greater intolerance and a shrinking capacity to listen to the voices of others.

In the West there is almost a total collapse of all certainties, philosophical, moral, or political, when certainties had been a characteristic feature of the European mind. Now practically every assumption, which had earlier been taken as self-evident, is being questioned. But what is being questioned, most of all, is whether there can ever exist any one world-view, or any one faith, or any one rationality, from which all individuals can derive a shared meaning.

As a consequence, there is a growing sense of intellectual and moral disquiet in the Western mind, leading to a search, growing ever more desperate, for a view of human life that will not suffer the fate of its predecessors. This search is taking place in the minds of ordinary men and women as earnestly as in the minds of philosophers. Commenting on this situation, Richard J. Bernstein, in his book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* says: 'The movement from confidence to scepticism about foundations, methods, and rational criteria of evaluation has not been limited to philosophy. The confusion and uncertainty in philosophy exhibits and reflects a phenomenon that is characteristic of our intellectual and cultural life. In the entire range of the human and social sciences, we have witnessed the playing out of bold attempts to secure foundations and elaborations of new methods that promise genuine knowledge, followed by a questioning that reveals cracks and crevices in what had been taken to be solid and secure'.

What, in fact, is played out is a certain method of looking at man and the world which had, by its very logic, fragmented life in several contesting polarities. The European reflections on human life are firmly rooted in the method of *either/or,* the law of the excluded middle, or the law of contradiction, which saw human life in terms of *either* this or that, true or false, reason *or* faith, man *or* nature, the individual or society, man as autonomous subject or man as an object. The history of European thought is a history of the mutually antagonistic ideologies, which that method produced, with -their respective political systems. The failure of ideologies, either individualism or socialism, is the failure of that method.

This method reduced the many sidedness of human life to a supposedly irreconcilable opposition between the different aspects of man's individuality. In setting one aspect of his personality against another, it brought into the individual a self-division that was mostly of a logical kind but was taken to be a part necessarily of life itself.

That resulted inevitably in the immense violence that was done to the individual in the name of ideology or what the individual inflicted upon himself by taking his self-division to be absolute.

The disorder and violence, *adharma,* of one ideology was sought to be corrected by a succeeding one, but the latter remained still in the logical framework of *either/or* and, therefore carried within itself the same disorder of fragmenting life artificially. The failure of successive ideologies has now created in the Western mind generally a reluctance to engage in fundamental questions concerning the individual and his situation. This is at a time when those questions have acquired, more than ever before, an anguished urgency because of the very freedom the people are seeking-the freedom from discredited ideas and debased social and political structures. In seeking that freedom, people are seeking the inner balance of life, which is the meaning of dharma.

Dharmic civilisation had clearly seen the method of *either/or* as too narrow a logical framework to account for the manysidedness of life and its diversity. It saw the individual life as composed of different levels, finding different expressions at different stages of life. Reason was not opposed to faith, man was not against nature, the individual was not set against society, nor against himself. That produced in India a capacity of seeing human life with many eyes and speaking about it with many tongues. But that radically relativistic method, while closest to human realities, also gave rise to a situation where, by just one twist of the argument, by simply changing the definition of a thing, everything could become permissible. And yet, not quite.

Indian thought acknowledges that human life, by its very nature, is composed of opposites. Neither one of them can be denied, or suppressed, without inviting untruth or disorder, first within the individual, and then in society, for then human reality would have been perceived only incompletely. The history of mankind is, therefore, necessarily a history of tension between necessity and

freedom, the individual as a self-determined being and as dependent on the will of the other, human endeavour and fate, history and circularity of time, the material basis of life and the spiritual destiny of man, the functionality of social order and its ethical basis. It is only that, properly understood, they are, as Dharmic traditions teach, neither absolute nor irreconcilable.

Despite its abiding concern with order of life, *dharma,* there came about in the history of Indian society also numerous reversals of the spirit of *dharma.* Much of the violence to the individual, and the degradation of his worth, that we witness today in India can be traced directly to those reversals.

Let me mention here only three of them. In the first place, the functional nature of *varna,* with its corresponding divisions of professional ethics, was reversed into a system of hereditary castes irrespective of their functional purpose and their specific ethical discipline.

Secondly, the tradition that mere authority could not be the criterion of truth, though testimony of authority as one of the means to valid knowledge was not discounted, was reversed to a position where authority as such, either of the *guru,* or of custom, or of the king, became the chief criterion of truth.

Thirdly, by imperceptible degrees, authority became above law, the very reverse of a most central Indian tradition, emphasised practically on every page of the *Mahabharata,*that all authority be subject to *dharma* as law.

The aim of *dharma* is: To create and sustain individual and social conditions where each individual, in his or her own being, and in relationship with others, is able to explore the potential of his or her life and bring it to fruition in such ways that he or she can.

Since conflict cannot altogether be eliminated from human living, to create individual and social spaces where the individual's conflicts within himself, or between one individual and another, or between

one group and another, are honestly recognised; their historical and psychological roots are traced and a solution to them is sought in the interrelatedness of all human life, and in the interdependence of all social living.

To create individual and social conditions for a spiritual coming together of different traditions and building of bridges between the different peoples.

How are these to be achieved? This question occupied Indian thinkers for numerous centuries. The world, in the historical conditions of today, is again searching for a cosmic principle that takes up in its enfolding meaning all expressions of life and thought as stages in the succesively higher development of man. That search is a search for *dharma.*

3

UNDERSTANDING INDIA

Key to Reform of Society

Delivered on 23 December 1989

In his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, Karl Marx had said: 'philosophers have so far tried to *interpret* the world; the point, however, is to *change* it'. I apply this thesis to India-but by turning it around. Reformers have so far tried to change India; the point, however, is to understand India.

Any attempt to enlighten and reform Indian society that was not rooted in a clear understanding of the issues with which it had for centuries struggled was doomed to failure from the very beginning.

Between the Utilitarian and Evangelical condemnation of Indian society as barbaric, irrational, superstitious, treating custom as a fetish, despotic, cruel and licentious, and the Indian reaction to that portrait, Indian society continued to be misunderstood. The falsehood of the early English assessment and the inevitably one-sided Indian response to it have alike prevented a proper understanding of Indian thought and life.

For that condemnation, most of it based on ignorance and prejudice, was not entirely without truth, and the spirited Indian defence, when it began to take pace, was not without its untruth. However, given the framework which existed then, and the English educated Indians becoming a part of it, both these were overlooked. And so were the underlying problems of Indian society which, in actual fact, were much deeper and far more serious than either the English or the Indian reformers ever saw.

There are, however, certain very special difficulties in understanding Indian society. The first one is that from the very beginning of their systematic thought, at least a millennium before Christ, Indian thinkers saw human reality as immensely varied and complex, finding its expressions at different levels of consciousness. Therefore, they saw the human situation with many eyes and spoke about it with many tongues. This remained ever afterwards an essential characteristic of Indian thought as well as of Indian life. One of its many consequences has been that practically all statements about the Indian position on the issues governing human life would need to be qualified, even as they were qualified by ancient Indians themselves no sooner than they made them. This puts a severe pressure not only on language but on human patience as well. The alternative is undoubtedly far less strenuous but thoroughly misleading.

The second difficulty arises directly from the first. Since human reality is exceedingly complex, and has numerous levels of expression, Indian philosophers put aside as altogether inadequate the law of the excluded middle. While that law made language intelligible, it falsified reality; for hardly anything of human reality is susceptible to the logic of *either/or.* It was too restrictive a logical rule to have ever been an infallible instrument of thinking about man and his Position in the world. It is not that the law of contradiction was abandoned in India, but only that its value for making reality manifest was clearly seen as limited.

As a consequence, particularly in the higher reaches of Indian thought, one finds propositions that assert and deny a thing at the same time, or assert of a thing two opposite attributes simultaneously. To anyone conditioned to the Aristotelian law of contradiction, such propositions would seem literally meaningless, for they would not be propositions at all. Nor would human communication remain a

cheerful activity if every statement were to be qualified, often by its opposite, no sooner than it was made. For then one would not be saying anything definite which could be assessed for its truth or falsehood. In speaking about Indian society, one simply cannot avoid making precisely such statements. To avoid doing so may serve the purpose of clarity, but it would do so at the expense of truth. This applies to human life as well.

Given the idea of *dharma* on which is founded the whole of Indian culture, the question: 'how does one understand one's society?', was of no particular relevance. The question always was: 'how does one order one's life?' The answers to this question were accepted mostly on faith, by the majority of people at any rate, though the answers were themselves based on close reasoning which was entirely secular. Acceptance, and not understanding, has been the main Indian social value for centuries together; whereas its very opposite, understanding and not mere acceptance, has been the main philosophical value in India. Neither was always wholly true. To an Indian whose consciousness is conditioned by *dharma,* the question of understanding the universe is most natural, but the question of understanding his society very nearly meaningless.

The Dharmic tradition has undoubtedly been that, in order to understand his true nature, man must turn inwards. But its reverse has been equally a Dharmic tradition. A person understands nothing of himself unless he first understands things which surrounds him-his social traditions. It is these which form him, give him his perceptions, his language, with which he brings himself in relation with the world and with the others of his kind. The 'true nature of man' is not entirely meta-historical; it depends also upon his roots in the specific ordering of his society. His 'nature' is what his culture conditions it to be. At the same time, in the Dharmic view, man is not exhausted by his social context. There is a part of him which transcends context and

history. Dharmic culture did not posit any contradiction between the two. It is simultaneously rooted in history and in transcendence. The relationship between them, at all times uneasy, has been at the very centre of the idea of *dharma.*

All through history Indian life was lived at several levels, not successively but at the same time, each level a world of its own. That meant the facility to speak with many tongues and to see with many eyes. For example, at one level, reason was regarded as of decided value; at another level, of no value; at still another level, the talk of value and no value was itself considered meaningless. The failure to keep them distinct often produced confusion, and confusion a habit of muddled talk. Each human faculty was investigated with scientific passion, and a high ideal set for the purity of speech, of hearing, of seeing, of touching, of doing; then at one level, all faculties were drowned in the frenzy of experience; at another level, subdued and transcended. The two languages of experience and transcendence flowed into each other.

The Dharmic quest was more for completeness than for perfection.

Just as thinking, feeling and doing were to be harmonised in a human completeness, so also man's life was to be harmonised with the life of animals and of trees and plants. But the history of Indian life has been also one of fragmentation and' breaking apart. It has been a history not of diversity alone but Of isolation as well. There were innumerable i contexts-of caste, of locality, or sect and cult, of philosophical world view-all sought to be brought under a general order denoted by the word *dharma,* but in a sense each remaining isolated from the rest, even though isolation was looked upon as disorder and death. To understand India is to understand the particular forms of Dharmic order and disorder.

An understanding of the cultural presuppositions of a people is what is involved in understanding, their social context and the

individuals placed in it. What is further involved is an historical search for the precise manner in which the social and political structures reflected those presuppositions, and each limited the other in turn. It is only through grasping the inter-connections between them that a full understanding of a people is possible. It is an investigation into the kinds of questions that they have asked in their passage through history, into the uses to which they have put their language, into their social conflict and the outcome thereof, and so into the specific possibilities of their social context. *Dharma* thus becomes the very heart of inquiry into India.

4

LIMITS TO POLITICAL POWER

Traditional Indian Precepts

Delivered on 6 January 1990

The question at the very heart of the theory of *dharma* in the context of law and politics was with regard to political power, *bala,* its sources, the manner of its use, the limits on its exercise, and the legitimacy of revolt against it. The two chief political concerns of Dharmic India were: to set limits to authority; and to provide to the individual the conditions of freedom and liberty in which each person might develop the potential of his or her being, subject to the same freedom for others. What is indisputable is the fact that from the very beginning of Indian history these two were the dominant concerns.

It is curious that much of the modem assessment of the *Arthasastra,* assigned to 321 B.C. in the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, and the discovery of which in 1905 by R.Shamasastry was an event of great excitement, should have centred largely on the latter's declared freedom from abstract morality in the realm of political practice. Max Weber was profoundly mistaken in his contention that the problem of political ethic has never preoccupied Indian theory, and that in the absence of ethical universalism and natural right, it could hardly be otherwise. He was equally mistaken in his view that 'the *dharma* of the prince was to conduct war for the sake of pure power *per se'* Kosambi, too, was mistaken in his view that, to the author of *Arthasastra,* 'the sole purpose of every action was the safety and profit of the state.'

Rather, the sole purpose of the science of politics, as of the rule of law, *danda-niti,* was to preserve *dharma.* The purpose always was to create social conditions where every individual could follow his *svadharma,* the uniting principle of his inner being, the most important condition being the orderly progress and welfare of the society as a whole, *lokayatra.*

According to the *Arthasastra,* the one supreme maxim to which the king was subject, and to which all his actions were subordinate, was: 'In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare, his welfare; whatever pleases himself that he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good'.

The position of the *Mahabharata,* put across in its celebrated *Santiparva,* was most clearly this: preservation of social order and welfare of the people, *loka-samgraha,* must ever be the standard in politics and to it everything else subordinate. Whatever is against the people or against their dominant sentiment, *loka viruddha* was *adharma:* whatever was conducive to their welfare, was *dharma,* even if it meant going against conventional morality, morality being in any case relative to time, place and circumstance.

Whether, or not, political theory in India was completely devoid of 'ideology' in the European sense of that word, as Weber concluded that it was, it was hardly ever true that 'all political theory was a completely oral technology of how to get and hold power', as he contended. There is no doubt that the *Mahabharata* extolled power as that upon which ultimately everything, even *dharma,* depends for its existence. But power was never considered its own justification.' On the contrary, power without *dharma* was as much the way to tyranny as *dharma* left unprotected by the king was the way to anarchy.

Punishment being the means by which people were kept steady in their respective duties, and the wicked prevented from creating disorder and chaos, the king was exhorted to use that means

effectively. In protecting the weak against the powerful, and one's realm against its hidden enemies, if recourse were to be had to killing, to falsehood, to treachery, to sowing confusion and dissension among the enemy, then the king was expected to be strong enough to follow that course.

Expediency, and not morality in the abstract, was to be his guide in such circumstances. Provided-and this was always the overriding provision-that he was himself free from passion,'kept before him his primary duty of welfare to his people, did not press the rule of expediency to serve his own ends, and he was all these in relation to those who were good and virtuous.

Expediency in social and political matters was not a new principle brought into Dharmic consciousness by the *Arthasastra* or the *Mahabharata.* Given the task of bringing into one social order without too much strife the large number of indigenous tribes, as well as those foreign tribes that had occupied different tracts and had come to stay, and given the fact that that was achieved in a manner incredibly humane, expediency was in evidence from the very beginning of Indian history. But once upheld formally, as in the *Arthasastra* and the *Mahabharata,* expediency became a common trait of Indian conduct, though increasingly divorced from its obligatory ethical discipline that was also insisted upon by these works.

That the principle of expediency was at all times firmly subordinated to the prior trust with which the office of the king was invested, and that expediency was not to be employed in derogation of the king's own paramount function, was made absolutely clear by the *Mahabharata* in the following principles to which the exercise of political power was subject. They are to be found in the *Anusasanaparva.*

As the text enjoins, 'Let the king first discipline himself. Only then must he discipline his subordinates and his subjects: for that is

the proper order of discipline. The king who tries to discipline his people without first disciplining himself, becomes an object of ridicule in not being able to see his own defects'.

'In order to protect his people, let the king protect himself at all places, and devote himself to doing good to his people', the text prescribed.

It was also laid down that 'The interests of his people are alone his interests, their well-being his well-being: what is pleasing to them is pleasing to him, and in their good lies his own good. Everything that he has is for their sake, for his own sake he has nothing.' Finally, the king was expected 'to protect his people from their fear of him, from their fear of others, from their fear of each other, and from their fear of things that are not human.'

The political concerns of Dharmic India derived their force from a more fundamental concern than any other-reverence for life. Not in its physical form alone, but in all the ' mental and spiritual and emotional forms that life expresses itself. The *dharmic* principles of political order, while paying scrupulous attention to the organisation of society and to the problems that any form of organisation must lead to, remained firmly rooted in a unified concept of life where politics was an integral part of *dharma.* Deeply secular in their character, and universal in their sweep, those principles were not isolated or severed from other human concerns.

It is not astonishing, given their lack of knowledge of Indian texts and their self-perceptions of a civilising role, that the British maintained even in the closing years of the nineteenth century that Indian society had never known any self-governing institutions, much less principles of freedom and liberty.

What is truly astonishing is that, in meeting the challenge in the first place to their entire civilisation, English-educated Indians accepted with ease the very universe of discourse in which the British

had mounted their challenge. That universe of discourse, with its methods, remained intact even after India won independence from British rule, although it began to be questioned seriously in the West itself and has now almost crumbled.

The consequence is that India's organised political life has no connection with its own tradition and is severed from the vitality of the people. It will require great skill, and even greater patience, to untangle the horribly knotted ways in which the loss of that tradition has caused so much of violence and disorder in our social life today.

5

DHARMA IS NOT 'RELIGION'

Misconception Has to Be Removed

Delivered on 20 January 1990

There has been no misunderstanding more serious in nature than the supposition that Indian culture was fundamentally 'religious', in the sense in which the words 'religion' and 'religious' have been used in the West for centuries.

These imply a belief in God as the creator of the universe, a central revelation of God, a messenger of that revelation, a central book containing the life and the sayings of that messanger of God, a central code of commandments, a corpus of ecclesiastical laws to regulate opinions and behaviour in the light of these, and a hierarchy of priesthood to supervise that regulation and control. These are the common, though in their specific contents very different, elements of what are described as the historical religions of the world.

Dharma, the universal foundation upon which all life is based, is immeasurably more than 'religion'; mistakenly one has been taken to be the other. It is to this confusion that we can trace most of the Western misconceptions of Indian culture. Since a great many of our political and legal institutions continue to be founded upon those misconceptions; hence most of the social and political problems that the people of India face today.

Mr. Justice S.S.Dhavan was profoundly right when speaking at a seminar on 'Secularism: Its Implications for Law and Life in India', organised in November 1965 by the Indian Law Institute and the Education Commission, he pointed out that 'The British and European

thinkers identified the Sanskrit word *dharma* with Hindu religion, and in course of time with religion itself. This misunderstanding of the concept of *dharma* is responsible for the mistaken view that Indian jurisprudence is wrapped in religion.' Of course, there never was any such thing as 'Hinduism'. The result was a double error, the grafting of the word 'religion' on a purely imaginary entity called 'Hinduism' Given that, the question of secularism itself could be perceived only in that mistaken context.

In the wake of the Enlightenment, an eighteenth-century phenomenon that was to change so radically Europe's perceptions of itself and, therefore, its perceptions of other civilisations, the religious-secular controversy had roused such passions that if a view was secular, it had to be fiercely anti-religion.

A secular view of life, turning into an *ism* as opposed to Christianity, soon became an ideology from which every human striving that was not of the material world alone was resolutely eliminated. When combined with individualism, it developed, again m opposition to Christianity, a concept of law where the main element was, not one's ethical responsibility for the other, but legal accountability.

That was because, by the eighteenth century, individualism had degenerated from a passionate and ennobling concern for the inviolable worth of the individual to a possessive and grasping individualism.

This was simply not the case with Dharmic thought. Because the Indian mind did not think in terms of contesting polarities of the *either/or* kind, it would be yet another misunderstanding if the 1, statement that *dharma is* profoundly secular is taken to mean that it is for that reason anti-religion, or that it has concern with other human beings in the form of legal accountability alone. The secular nature of *dharma* lies in the fact that all Indian explanations of man are evidently

located in man himself, in the very structure of his being. It is that which binds one human being with another. For the ethical foundations, and the limits of one human being's conduct towards another, were already inherent in man's being, in the force of *dharma.* That force is universal.

But that is not at all the sense in which the policy-makers of independent India understood the word 'secular'. On the contrary, their minds operated wholly in the religion/secularism opposition, which was a product of Western history but applied by them to the Indian situation, where, quite unlike the West, social relationships were governed not by the accident of birth, nor by the opinions one held, nor by the faith one professed, but by a consideration above them all-one's indissoluble bond with all life.

Undeniably, that was not a factual picture of Indian history always. There was at all times of Indian life a falling off from that ideal of human unity, sometimes even grievously so. India has known one man's cruelty to another, and humiliation, and loss of human worth and dignity because that human other was born in a lowly caste. But the point is that that was always considered *adharma,* disorder, a gross violation of one's deepest being. And the corrective appeal was always to *dharma.* That is what the *Mahabharata* is all about, to mention only one of the products of the Indian mind.

Here the issue is that all conceptual words have their histories: if one such word is thoughtlessly applied to an entirely different environment of thinking, one history is wrongly grafted on another, which can lead only to wrong perceptions, and then to disorder M the minds of men. All social disorders originate primarily in the minds of men.

Just as the word *dharma* is untranslatable, and the word 'religion' conveys no substantial part of its meaning, the word 'religion' is similarly untranslatable into any of the Indian languages, for the

concept of 'religion' is altogether absent from Dharmic language. As a consequence, 'religion' is translated invariably as *dharma. This* leads to a total misunderstanding and to wrong formulations. For example, derived from the notion that secularism can mean, in the field of public policy, neutrality to all religions and not necessarily anti-religion, it is tanslated offcially in Hindi as *dharma-nirapekshata,* which perverts, the meaning of *dharma.* If *dharma* is the foundation upon which all life is based, then nothing can be neutral or indifferent to the very thing in which it is grounded.

At the 1965 seminar on secularism and its implications for law and life in India, while demonstrating the secular nature of *dharma* as law, Justice S.S. Dhavan also demonstrated that the assumptions underlying Western jurisprudence at different stages of its development were radically different from the assumptions of traditional Indian jurisprudence. But it was the Western political philosophy founded on the rights of the individual that dominated the Contitution-making in India. He concluded that 'the divorce of the Indian people from their jurisprudence has proved harmful.'

The real problem is that of conveying a fundamental concept of one culture to another, during which some loss of meaning must necessarily occur. Marco Pallis, in his book A *Buddhist Spectrum,* presents this problem with admirable clarity. He says: 'the word *dharma* which the Indian traditions have rendered familiar has no really adequate counterpart in the terminology of European languages; if the range of ideas this word stands for must needs be found, at least implicity, in the substance of every religion, absence of a readily intelligible term to cover that range in all manner of contexts remains a sad drawback as far as communication is concerned. Today one is feeling this lack more than ever, because the truths to which *dharma* corresponds in the field of metaphysical ideas and spiritual and even

social applicability are among tile ones which, by the questions they raise, are troubling people's minds most acutely at this moment.'

But the problem becomes even greater when that concept, clearly universal in its sweep, is put forth as a wholly-owned property of that particular culture, in which case, combined with misunderstandings in inter-cultural communication, its meaning is perverted even in the culture of its origin. That is what has happened to the concept of *dharma* in the hands of sectarian pundits, for whom meaning is only textual, and those militant Hindus who, confusing *dharma* for religion, are striking postures which, in point of fact, are derived from the very opposite of what they think they are trying to protect.

The Dharmic culture, like the Chinese, attached utmost importance to the proper use of words, which if used carelessly, can invoke wrong things. They can change perceptions completely. The use of the word 'religion' has had that effect in modem India.

There is something in the very nature of religion which is divisive: *dharma* unites. A religion excludes all that it is not: *dharma* includes every form of life. A religion often makes claims that are not supportable: the claims of *dharma* are the claims of life. Religion and politics must necessarily be separated for a sane world: every shade of political thought and practice that is sane must necessarily have its basis in *dharma.*

6

SENSE AND NONSENSE ABOUT THE 'GURU' CONCEPT

Delivered on 13 February 1990

There was no gift of theistic cults in India that was more momentous than the institution of the guru and none more harmful when its excesses inevitably turned into its pathology.

In our own times a different dimension has been added to the idea of the guru. Disenchanted by Christianity and secularism alike, and equally by materialistic prosperity, a great many Western men and women, moved by the deepest stirrings of mind and spirit, have looked to India for a guru-and found him or her.

In response to an unprecedented demand, that commodity has materialised in abundance. The selling of a guru has become a highly sophisticated business. One can see, for example, in the subway of Frankfurt's railway station the poster of a famous guru, with his telephone numbers, promising instant nirvana, with two other attractive posters on either side, one promising instant ecstasy to women who would use a particular brand of perfume, and the other promising to men satisfaction of the male need to control something powerful if they would own a particular make of a car.

Yet another Indian guru found a world-wide market, particularly in the disenchanted West, for his theory that the way to salvation lies through one's sexual fulfilment to be obtained by complete submission to the sexual urge and its many expressions. In a perfect, perhaps unconscious, mix of symbols, signifying charisma, status

and phallic power, his Western devotees gifted him with an ever increasing number of an aristocratic and powerful car.

The disorders of Western civilisation resulted successively from external authority deciding the subjective meanings of one's individuality, first by the authority of the faith, then by the authority of reason, followed by the triumphant authority of science and technology. This is why some of the disenchanted fell into the disorder of another civilisation, in the form of the guru in the mistaken hope, no doubt, that a guru would return them by his spiritual grace to the deepest sources of meaning and beauty.

That happened rarely, for only rarely was an authentic guru to be found. Instead, the guru that was found, put himself or herself as the ultimate criterion of truth, another centre of unquestioned authority. Disenchanted twice over, for their flight was a flight from authority as the sole criterion of truth, not a few young men and women from the West were now driven to the point very nearly of a suicidal despair.

There is evidently a sense, acknowledged by all Indian thinkers, in which the concept of guru is legitimate as well as practically necessary. In order to learn a subject or an art of some complexity, or any skill of a refined kind, one needs a preceptor to begin with. To master any of these, one may need a preceptor for quite a while before striking out on a new path of self-fulfilment. The attitude that is unquestionably required on the part of the one who learns towards the one who teaches is that of respect and, in some measure, of obedience. In certain circumstances it may involve also some element of personal service, although not forced, nor always necessary. But the guru-sishya tradition of theistic India went a great deal farther than that, and also much deeper.

Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, among the most renowned exponents of Indian thought and practice, says: 'If one must need have a teacher as guide in the initial phases of even ordinary education, how great must

be the need for reliance on some other in the difficult path of spirituality. It is only when one is complete in oneself that one is also free from dependence upon the other.'

But that reliance turned into psychological dependence, dependence into adoration, adoration into that state of mind where the guru was elevated to the place assigned to God, as can be seen from many.Tantric texts. It produced, at one end, devotees seeking relief from the troubles of their daily existence, and at the other end, the guru dispensing it. That made independent thinking of little value.

The value of rational thinking lowered, the force of external authority was reinforced. Authority being regarded as the criterion of truth, and custom of good conduct, they turned into something very much more than functional arrangements of a well-ordered society. Rather, they were invested with a touch almost of the divine. In brief, the guru became the apotheosis of those absolutist trends in Indian society that had also existed beside the essentially relativistic temper of the Dharmic mind.

In the place of philosophical reasoning, and public debates on questions that touched human life most intimately, there sprang up a culture of discourse, *pravachana.* The guru discoursed, the disciple listened.

A true listening was made exceedingly difficult, and increasingly rare, by the spoken word of the guru as compared with the written word of the philosopher. The person of the guru, often charismatic, held the disciples, at the time of the discourse as at other times, in a state not unlike that of trance. His voice, his gaze, his resplendent robes, the attractiveness of his person, the whole atmosphere of the place, held the disciples with a power that was undoubtedly physical. Or it was at best aesthetic. In either case, physical or aesthetic, there was no true listening but only submission to the charismatic figure of

the guru. That meant a serious distraction from the sense, or nonsense, of the spoken word.

The culture of discourse, in contrast with the earlier method of dialogue and debate, became the final development of all those trends that had either limited the role of the intellect in grasping the true nature of reality, or had devalued it altogether. All the anti-intellect trends in Indian society converged, finally, on the institution of the guru. Together they became the source of the authoritarianism always latent in India.

One of the important issues over which there was a vigorous debate in the history of Indian philosophical systems concerned the status of authority, either of scriptures or of a person, as a means to knowledge. It is in the light of that history in the first place that a proper assessment of the ways in which the institution of the guru took hold of the minds and the lives of the people can be made.

And it is in that light that the sense and the nonsense of the idea of the guru becomes perfectly clear. For, with the exception of Mimamsa, which upheld the authority of the Veda as the absolutely infallible source of all valid knowledge, all other schools of Indian philosophy maintained that authority was only one of the means to knowledge, its validity being further subject to the test of reason.

The Buddha did not say, Re the materialists, that the propositions found in the Veda were necessarily false. They might be true or false, he said, and had to be judged by reason and experience. Even his own propositions had to be tested and not accepted without thought. At every turn he reminded the monks: "Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence!" Consistent with his rejection of authority as an exclusive guide to truth, the Buddha refused to appoint a successor.

The attitude of the Buddha towards authority was reversed dramatically in the subsequent history of Buddhism in India, chiefly

in the Mahayana and the tantric cults. In the Buddhist tantras, the highest place was assigned to the guru, reserving for him also the highest praise, even raising him to the status of the Buddha. That resulted in nothing better than sexual licence and disorder, though Gopinath Kaviraj has vigorously disputed this view.

There is, above all, the most instructive parable of Dattatreya who,, on being asked to identify the source of his astonishing self-possession and equanimity, names his twenty-four gurus from whom he learnt everything. They comprise the elements of nature, the river, certain animals, even an insect. His last guru was a prostitute,Pingala by name, from whom he learnt his ultimate lesson. The parable ends by exhorting: 'Learn, above all, from the rhythms of your own body. Indeed, be your own guru.'

7

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Potential of Dharmic Methods

Delivered on 17 March 1990

'With my both arms raised 1 am shouting, but nobody listens to me; when both wealth and sexual happiness can be had from *dharma,* why do not people follow it?' It is with this anguished cry of its author that the *Mahabharata* ends.

Conflict in human relationships and what one has also within oneself is the chief concern of the *Mahabharata.* The very setting in which the discussion on the visible and the; invisible sources of conflict takes place is what everybody knew would be a devastating war but which nobody could prevent. And what was established by that great war was known even before it began. No possession that needs violence to acquire it is of any worth, for it cannot be enjoyed without fresh anxieties about retaining it. A conflict that is resolved by force and violence will only generate a more intense conflict and greater violence. That truth is no truth at all which for its validation must be forced upon others. Arjuna, the conquering hero, was soon humbled, by a most humiliating turn of events, into awareness that 'the knowledge of weapons is not forever.'

The anguished cry of Vyasa at the end of one war some 6000 years ago has continued to echo ever since. There is in the world today a renewed search for those conditions in man's life that should make it possible for him to achieve material prosperity without spiritual

poverty, pleasure without reducing human worth, knowledge that will not seek power over others but enlighten the concerns of everyday, life, political power that will be exercised with wisdom and compassion, and a right relationship between the one and the other that will enhance both and debase neither. The West has been increasingly looking to India for a key to these.

But it is in India, engulfed in violent conflicts of one variety or the other, with a distressing reduction of human sensitivity and worth, that that search is required most today. it can be maintained with justice that it was in Indian thought that a most thoroughgoing understanding of the roots of human conflicts was achieved. Why then is that understanding not available to us? That is because it has been greatly obscured by the wrong notion that Indian civilisation is 'Hindu' civilisation, that its essence is *Hindutva,* or 'Hinduness', which is today threatened and needs to be defended from its enemies, if necessary by violent means.

One evident feature of all Indian thought has been that every inquiry into the human condition begins with the common facts of man's life. At least five major *Upanishads* begin with food and water as the basis of all life; and, even before they explore the nature of ultimate reality, they emphasise the sacredness of what supports life. The *Mahabharata,* in taking up the pursuit of wealth and sexual pleasure as the two overwhelmingly dominant facts of human life, makes as one of its central methods the fact of selfinterest, *svartha,* as the spring of all human actions, and therefore also of most human conflicts.

The *Mahabharata* says *(Santi-parva):* Whatever means are required to serve self-interest, everybody in every matter adopts them. Neither is friendship permanent nor enmity; it is self-interest that makes somebody now a friend and then an enemy. This material world is shot through with self-interest, and no one is beloved of

anyone; the affection between brother and brother, as between man and wife, is based solely on self-interest, there being no love or affection without some reason. Reasons are altered by time, and self-interest is altered likewise; the wise understand self-interest only too well, and in this the common folk follow the wise.

The next step, therefore, which the *Mahabharata* takes is to show that most people have an exceedingly limited view of self-interest and must, for that reason, live in a state of perpetual conflict, for their interest would then keep colliding with the interest of others. A larger view of self-interest does not necessarily end all conflict; for conflict is an inescapable part of life. What it does is that one's attitude towards others, and therefore towards the problem of conflict, is greatly changed. But that is because one's understanding of one's self is changed in the first place. And that is what the entire corpus of Dharmic thought endeavours to bring about.

There is in human relationships conflict and violence not because of the absence of selfless love from the generality of human affairs but because there is not in them even serious and strong self-love. If there were, it would lead one, according to the *Mahabharata.,* in two related directions.

First of all, even if one does not feel obliged to decide whether the idea of selfless love is anything more than a purely idealistic sentiment, there is the plain fact that one cannot truly serve one's own interest without at the same time, and in some measure at least, serving the interest of others. The two are inseparably bound., The essence of the theory of karma is, that what one does to the other alters one's self in the same measure or even in a greater measure.

If we consider in this article only one's pursuit of wealth as also a source of conflicts, intelligent self-interest clearly demands that before

wealth can be generated, earned and enjoyed, there must exist conditions for social peace and harmony. But those conditions require, in turn, that the pursuit of wealth, *artha,* must in all circumstances be subject to. *dharma.* The *Mahabharata* says: Only that wealth which is earned through *dharma,* is proper wealth; that which comes through *adharma, is* improper; let no one earn wealth through cruel deeds. These sayings, repeated again and again, only upheld the sovereignty of *dharma* as law, and of law as fairness, reasonableness and justice.

Intelligent self-interest also dictates that a part of one's wealth be devoted to the interest of others and in their service, individually and collectively. For only by its sharing and distribution, does wealth increase. On this apparent paradox the *Mahabharata* dwells at great length. The principles it indicates in that regard can most properly be called principles of distributive justice, for that is what they are in their essence.

Similarly, in the field of taxation, the *Mahabharata* suggests the evident truth that it would not be in the interest of the people, and therefore not in the self-interest of the state, if the king were to levy irrational and oppressive taxes. Those were sure to create widespread conflict eventually. It says *(Santi-parva):* Should the king, out of greed, attempt to collect wealth by taxing the people far too much, he would neither keep the wealth thus accumulated, nor preserve the social order, indeed might destroy the very means on which the livelihood of people depend. No nation can progress where the people are squeezed unlawfully.

The other direction in which enlightened self-interest would take an individual is where he would examine the nature of human desire itself, for desire constitutes all that there is to self-interest. In no other civilisation as in Dharmic civilisation has there been a deeper analysis

of desire and its workings. The *Mahabharata* takes up what may be called the paradox of wealth: the greater the wealth, the more the discontent.

There are all the human facts to prove that wealth must produce greed, and from greed will arise a host of inclinations that are destructive of public as well as personal peace. The *Mahabharata* concludes: On acquiring wealth, men want to acquire a kingdom; having acquired a kingdom they want to become gods; and then, among gods, they want to become Indra. Even if one becomes wealthy, one may not become a king or a god; if one does become a god, and among gods Indra, one would remain dissatisfied still.

8

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Relevance of Age-Old Indian Values

Delivered on 31 March 1990

The problem of conflict lies, it seems, less in a conflict and more in the means that are adopted to resolve it. These are based on a whole lot of presuppositions which are open to question and may not command universal acceptance. What is itself in question cannot, then, be a reliable guide to the resolution of a conflict, except for those who believe in the truth of their presuppositions.

But there are unresolved conflicts, some of them leading to immense violence, not only between those who do and those who do not, but also among those who do. There are nearly as many conflicts between Muslims and Muslims, and Hindus and Hindus, as there are between Hindus and Muslims. The conflicts between Christians and Christians, and Communists and Communists, have been as oppressive as those between Christians and non-Christians and between Communists and Capitalists.

Those very presuppositions that were invoked to end oppression, and therefore revolt and conflict, such as the will of God, purpose in history, supremacy of reason as the ordering principle of human life, the ends of equality and justice, the pleasure-principle or the principle of utility, created much deeper conflicts than the ones they sought to settle. Is this, like the fact of conflict itself, a perpetual human condition, man trapped, without any hope of exit, in the paradox of his own existence?

This question appears, though in a somewhat different form, in the conflicts that take place in personal relationships as well: between man

and wife, father and son, lovers and friends for example. What seems to generate conflict there, a clash of two egos, conceal a deeper conflict: the one trying to appropriate the consciousness of the other. Is love only another name for it? and tenderness only a technique of control? Is sex an instrument of power over the other? Ultimately, it is a question whether one is being reduced to the status of an object. Here, too, as in the case of group conflicts, the same presuppositions are employed in the endeavour to resolve conflicts, or a set of several other presuppositions. The problem thus remains the same. A conflict is resolved by appealing to a value that lies outside the conflicting interests, but that value must be accepted without question, as an act of faith; if it is not, and for good reasons, then the conflict remains unresolved and a fresh conflict is born.

Conflict is not always with the other; it is quite as often with one's own self. Who has not been pulled, at some time or the other of his or her fife, in two opposite directions at the same time, in answer to the equal force of two conflicting parts of his or her own nature, *svabhava?* Self-division, like divisions outside, is a common human experience. By what means can self-conflict be resolved and self-division overcome? If the mind has its reasons, the heart has its reasons too. But not all conflicts within one's self are self-conflicts; some of them arise from a different source: conflict between two equally inviolable duties, or between right and right. Which of the two must one choose? This is exceedingly difficult to decide, and one faces a moral dilemma. Here, again, the problem of conflict must remain unsolved if prior suppositions and an arbitrary commitment to them are required to solve it.

It is on this ground, I submit, that the claim of universality of a particular religion, or philosophy, is put to test. Both Christinity and its first cousin, Marxism, have made for themselves a claim of universality, that each possesses a most radical understanding of the

human condition. The fact is that both have as their central point, from which everything else in them is derived, a prior supposition as regards the meaning of history. It is not until one has accepted the truth of their presuppositions concerning the value of history that one can accept the rest of their radically opposed doctrines concerning the condition of man. But the truth of those presuppositions has never. been established as a demonstrably universal part of the human condition, it has been only pre-supposed, a priority. Far from resolving the conflicts that one has with others and with one's self, they brought in their wake enormously violent conflicts. That is true of Islam as well.

Both Christianity and Islam have been integral parts of the development of Indian civilisation which, it must be repeated for the sake of clarity, is not 'Hindu' civilisation but Dhannic civilisation. Christianity has flourished in India for nineteen centuries, almost from the very beginning of Christianity. Islam has grown on the luxuriantly accepting soil of India for about eight centuries. Realising that Islam was no longer a wave from a foreign land but had its own organic growth in India, Akbar, among the wisest of the emperors India has known, dissociated the state completely from any forced conversion to Islam, and made peace among different faiths a very central part of his polity. Marxism, a very recent arrival, has found a response in the minds of a vast number of sensitive men and women of India. The question is: what is their understanding of the conflicts in the Indian society of today? What, indeed, is the understanding of that problem on the part of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Parsis?

Since the State is another governing factor, the question must be asked: what is the collective understanding, as distinct from the formal policy enunciated, in the Constitution, of its three wings, the legislature, the judiciary and the executive? Gandhi maintained that the State by its very nature is an instrument of coercion and violence.

How far has the state in India itself contributed to the wide-ranging conflicts in Indian society?

These are not academic questions of history and philosophy. They have an immediacy of an existential kind, considering what has been happening for several years in Punjab and what is now happening in Jammu and Kashmir. It is true nevertheless that any serious answer to them will open up the history of a whole civilisation, and with that will be resurrected the philosophical and theological presuppositions that formed the basis of that civilisation. However immediate our concerns, they are clearly rooted in a past. And because that past demonstrates how those prior suppositions turned into the greatest single factor of human conflict and violence, there can be little hope of gaining from that source a beneficial answer.

What we have to do, then, is to search for a common ground where we can find a set of shared methods, not doctrines, of struggling with the problem of conflict at different levels of human consciousness. Is there any such ground? I suggest that there is. It is provided by *dharma as* a method of tracing to its very roots the problem of conflict and resolving it.

If that is the case, and since the concept of *dharma* has been for numerous centuries as central to Indian living as it was central to Indian thought, what we have to account for first, if the search is to proceed further at all, is the continued existence in India of degrading conflicts nonetheless. In his letter of 20 August 1893, from America, to his devoted follower from Madras, Alasinga Perumal, Swami Vivekananda had said: 'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.'

Later, in September 1894, Vivekananda said in his letter to the Hindus of Madras: 'I will be the last man to claim perfection for the

Hindu society. No man is more conscious of the defects that are therein, or the evils that have grown up under centuries of misfortune'. Those defects and evils can be seen in many parts of Indian society today.

None of that discredits *dharma:* rather, its fundamental importance in human affairs is emphasised thereby. That people will not always follow *dharma,* and do what their rude inclinations propel them to do, was acknowledged by Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata,* at the end of a very detailed examination of the problem of conflict. That there will be misunderstandings as regards the nature of *dharma* was also acknowledged by him. But the point is that it will be in the midst *of adharma,* disorder of human existence, that *dharma* will remain the sustaining force of all life.

9

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

A Method of Respecting Limits

Delivered on 13 April 1990

Every act of communication can be at the same time an act also of misunderstanding. This worried even the Buddha. In the last moments of his life, he expressed his anxiety that his monks might have accepted his teachings for wrong reasons such as their love of him, or solely because of their faith in him, when what he had taught should be accepted by putting it to the test of reason.

Or, maybe, some of them had misapprehensions or doubts about his teachings. That there were good reasons for the Buddha's anxiety was proved by the fact that, within a hundred years of his passing, there arose among his followers a huge quarrel.

Some of them interpreted his teachings to mean that one should labour for one's own nirvana, and leave the suffering humanity to itself. Some others thought this attitude to be selfish and a complete negation of the Buddha's life and teachings, the central point of both being that everyman,*bodhisattva,* should labour, through a thousand lives if necessary, to help others gain freedom from fear and suffering, when these arise from conflict and from violence of one to the other, and they from one's wrong perceptions and ignorance. At first sight it would appear to be a cruel irony that Buddhism began its journey with an unresolved conflict within itself.

One thing is indisputably true about the entire corpus of Indian systematic thought: its central concern is one's relation with one's self, and one's relation with other beings, and how one is invariably

reflected in the other.Whatever else one may dispute about Indian thought, this fact one cannot.

Every form of Indian reflection on human existence is rooted in this concern, and it is to this concern that it returns again and again. The Dharmic method of dealing with human conflicts is, therefore, centred in the awareness that if conflicts arise from one's relationship with one's self and with others, the method of resolving them must also arise from that very relationship, for no human being can be perpetually at war with himself or herself or with others. None of these is a presupposition; the conclusion arises from the very structure of man's being and is therefore observable universally.

Given this, it follows that howsoever diverse and varied be the forms that one's relationship with others takes, one can derive from them satisfaction even of a most ordinary kind only by exercising as a basic condition of those relationships a common discipline upon oneself To experience the astonishing happiness of a deeper meaning of a relationship, requires the same discipline, although it requires without doubt also a deeper sensibility that lies for most part within oneself untouched. What is the nature of that discipline? and where is it derived from?

It may come from the doctrine, as in the Christian faith, that the evil of the world was a product of man exercising his will against the will of God, and therefore the discipline is that of subjugating one's will to the divine will. It may come from the same doctrine but the will of God interpreted very differently, as in Islam, and there the discipline has been, even more than in Christianity, that of a stem puritanical moral conduct first in relation to oneself and then in relation to others.

Or the discipline may come from the belief that the movement of time has meaning, the telos of history, in which human life is grounded, and moves in dialectical stages towards a definite goal, which is not at all what Judaism promised, or what Christianity

believes in, but the end of man's alienation from himself, which is caused when he is reduced by exploitative relations of production to being synonymous with his labour which alone he can sell in the market. There the discipline is the state taking in its hands all the means of production and restoring to the workers the dignity of their humanity. The discipline may come from other religious beliefs or political ideologies.

Differing vastly from each other, and within themselves divided into numerous sects and churches, over their fiercely conflicting interpretations of the will of God, or in its secularised version the will of history, they all share, however, one characteristic in common. Their explanation of the human situation, and of the drama of human conflicts that is enacted every day, lies primarily outside man, in some force that is over and above him: God, the devil, or history. The discipline that governs one's relation to oneself and one's conduct towards others is likewise drawn from a ground that is not wholly that of man.

The result has been the division of human existence into dualities that are in principle irreconcilable and conflicting. Above all, it divided human beings between those that believe in the prior suppositions of one's faith, religious or political, and those that did not. There was thus one kind of conduct towards one's fellow-believers and quite another kind of conduct towards non-believers.

It would be thoroughly misleading if it were to be concluded that, because Christianity and Islam as also Marxism, perceived human existence in terms of sharply contesting dualities, and based the entire edifice of their world view on prior suppositions, held true a priori, that their actual histories in relation to others followed everywhere and in every context their respective grand theological views of man and the world. If that were the case, then their histories could in principle have been written in advance, and very briefly.

If we take the case of Islam in India, it is simply not true that it progressed by means only of force. It genuinely progressed by example and precept. There arose in different parts of India Muslim saints, mostly sufis, whose concern was the suffering other, not in abstraction but in his or her concrete individuality. They had taken an inspired leap to *dharma* away from the limiting presuppositions of. theology, into the very source of one's conflict with oneself and with others: a limited understanding of relationships.

There are three main characteristic of the Dharmic method. First, it calls for no commitment to any prior supposition concerning the human condition. What has been called the theory *of karma,* or the dogma of *karma, is* neither theory nor dogma. It states what is a universally observable fact, that every act, including thought, for thought is also an act, leaves its corresponding trace in one's self and in those to whom that act is directed.

The particularity of psychological traces constitutes the particularity of one's individuality. They make one what one is, and one is constantly in the making.

Secondly, nothing in human life is so conflicting as to be unresolvable in principle. What seemed contradictory, and therefore irreconcilable, may be only contrary. The method was to acknowledge contrary needs and desires as part of human nature, and therefore its incoherence and then to show that there is a time for everything and it is within man's reach, through the experience of the entire range of contrary desires and needs to arrive at a state of complete coherence where what is contrary is naturally reconciled. There is no self-division that is permanent, nor any division in one's relationship with the other that is in principle irreconcilable.

Thirdly, it is observable in everybody's life that meaning lies in a context, and because contexts keep changing, so do meanings. Ideas and opinions are relative to historical context and there is nothing

absolute about them.Criticism of any one set of ideas can be on the basis only of another set of ideas, which are likewise relative to time and place.Then why aggressiveness and violence in setting them forth? Concepts, ideas, and theories must change, as history shows that they do, because they are necessarily incomplete. But *dharma will* abide, not as a mental construct, but as order inherent in life.

The Dharmic method of reconciliation was derived from the established human fact that there are different capacities among human beings, physical, mental and spiritual, and different states of development. It was a method of respecting limits.

10

RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Three Universal Disciplines

Delivered on 28 April 1990

The argument presented earlier in these columns on the question whether there exists a common universal ground on which human conflicts might be resolved revolves around three interrelated and selfevident truths.First, a basic condition of one's relation with one's self and with others is a certain discipline that one has to exercise upon oneself. Secondly, that discipline, in order to be universal, ought to be such that it does not, by bringing in new disputes about human nature and its meanings, itself increase the area of divisions within one's own self and increase also one's conflicts with those that may not share one's perceptions of the world.

And, thirdly, no religion, or philosophy, or political ideology, that derives its understanding of human existence from a set of prior suppositions, in whose truth one is called upon to believe as a matter wholly of faith, can for that reason ever be in a position to suggest a universal method of human reconciliation; for those presuppositions became in the history of mankind the most fertile source of violence.

In those very weeks when these reflections on the resolution of conflict were being published, there were the most distressing killings of human beings in Batala, in Ahmedabad, in Srinagar, leaving behind a great many other human beings in a state of uncomprehending personal grief. But these were only the more dramatic expressions of that moral nihilism that regards every act permissible that is done in the name of a religious or political cause.

Individual terrorism, like the terrorism of revolution, is in the eyes of its adherents a perfectly permissible method of resolving a conflict, of setting a wrong right, of creating what in their view will be a just order. That this is a delusion is suggested by the very history of that method, Above all, the method of systematic violence is a total negation of the value it invokes: freedom from injustice; for anything that is based on ideological murder leads not to freedom but to the most oppressive forms of slavery.

A universal method of human reconciliation, and of the consequent freedom from fear, fear of oneself and fear of the other, is suggested in the short parable of the three *da's* in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.* At the end of their education, god, man and demon ask Prajapati, the Primordial Man, their father, for a final instruction.

To god, Prajapati utters the sylable *da* and asks him if he understood what that signified. 'Yes,' answered god, 'you ask me to practise *damyata,* selfcontrol. To man, Prajapati utters likewise the syllable *da* and asks him whether he understood what that meant. 'Yes,' answered man, 'you ask me to practice *dana* sharing, giving. To demon, too, Prajapati gives the syllable *da* as his last instruction, and asks him in turn whether he understood what that meant. 'Yes,' answered demon, 'you ask me to practise *dayadhvam,* kindness, compassion'.

Ever since, the thunder in the sky has repeated that ultimate instruction: *da da da. To* gods, given to pleasure: self-control; to men, given to acquisition: share, give; to demons, given to cruelty and violence: compassion.

In the very depths of his being man carries the three primeval impulses of seeking pleasure, acquisition and violence. There are no gods or demons outside; we all carry them within us. All human conflicts, whatever forms they take, originate in these three impulses; and it is in the life-long effort to discipline them, howsoever diverse

be the paths that it takes, that the different methods of man's reconciliation with himself and with other beings must find their ultimate common roots.

Let us take Islam for example. If we leave aside its theological doctrines concerning man and the world, and leave aside the distinct discipline which those doctrines lead to, and leave aside also the violent disputes which divide Islam into numerous sects, and search instead for the philosophical essence of Islam, we * will find it in the same three primary disciplines that the *Brihadarnyaka Upanishad* speaks of- self-control, sharing, and compassion.

In Islam they are: *zabt, khairat,* and *rehm.* These are clear acknowledgements that, in the very least, human reality is composed of one's relation with one's self, and inseparably with that, one's relation with others. They are an affirmation, too, that while human relationships must generate conflicts, human life cannot be lived in conflicts alone: there is the equally abiding human urge to resolve conflicts. To deny this is to deny life. In affirming self-control, sharing, and compassion, Islam, in its deepest impulses, is an affirmation of life.

But self-control is not the negation of pleasure. Rather, pleasure is possible only with self-control, a certain measure of which is already built into the human system. It is only when pleasure becomes a mental construct, and is separated from the natural rhythm of human body, that it turns into an ideology and destroys itself.

For then pleasure becomes a principle, to the exclusion of everything else, and in that principle, centered in a very limited view of self-interest, the other becomes an object to be manipulated and controlled. One's quest for pleasure, without self-control, without measure, soon becomes one's quest for power over the other.

Some of the ugliest, though desperate, forms of conflict in one's relationships with others arise from that source. The same is true of

the impulse of acquisition without the balancing need to share. In the logic of unrestrained pleasure and acquisition, one becomes eventually an object even to one's self, which is the beginning of moral nihilism. It is a denial of limits.

The Upanishadic parable of the three *da's,* in suggesting limits, suggests the universal necessity of avoiding excess, *ati,* for it is in the human tendency to excesses that all conflicts originate, in the excess of pleasure and acquisition, and no less in the excess of virtue, in the excess even of knowledge. The Dharmic thought, the *Mahabharata* most of all, leads one then straight to the other-related three disciplines of speech, of law, and of subjugating one's ego to the greater good of others.

The whole of the Dharmic thought, in emphasising these disciplines, emphasises the individual; without, however, ignoring the power of context in which the individual lives his or her life. That opens the way to emphasising that conflicts are very often inherited from the social context in which one is born and are not of one's making, the degrading conflicts of the caste system for example. But no sooner does one give assent to the assumptions on either side of the conflict divide than one participates in that division and continues it. The individual and the social context become practically one.

The dharmic thinking on the subject of conflict and its resolution saw in that phenomenon even a greater danger, both to the individual and to society, than in the fact of a social conflict. The danger was of society becoming an absolute, and demanding from the individual an unthinking allegiance. One finds, therefore, in the Dharmic thought two movements that are apparantly contradictory

On the one hand, there is the great emphasis on *desa* and *kala,* time and place, the two co-ordinates of history, determining to a very large extent the direction of one's life; on the other hand, while remaining faithful to the human condition and denying none of its manifestations

as reality, there is even a greater emphasis on the universal capacity of man to transcend his condition. The question of conflict now shifts to an altogether

11

REGION, NATION AND WORLD

Must One Negate the Other?

Delivered on 12 May 1990

One is seldom aware how intensely local human life is-with its local colours, local sounds, fragrances, days and nights, the local sky and the stars in it, the local earth, the seasons and the changing sensations they bring of one's body, the local songs and rhythms, feuds and friendships, loves and hates, and participating in them all, as it were, the local deities who are one's own, and who supervise the endless succession of birth, marriage and death.

Any reality beyond that must be, in order to be real, likewise local. 'Region' is a geographical abstraction; 'nation', or 'nation-state', is an even greater abstraction; and the 'world', of which the scientists and the philosophers talk unceasingly, is the greatest abstraction of all. The universal man, whom the philosophers have created so lovingly, is a faceless, bloodless ghost, an empty name.

Has anybody ever seen or talked with the philosopher's universal man? He would scarcely know of anything concrete to talk about; his speech will have neither colour nor content; it will be an endless cascade of grand abstractions. In brief, the universal man, or the universal woman, will be monstrously boring to be with.

And yet, one will soon discover, that in order to travel in the world our universal man has a national passport, giving him a national identity, with the date of his birth in a particular city or village in a particular country, his address in a particular locality, his particular profession by which he earns his livelihood, and his marital status.

The philosopher's universal man is wrapped up in every conceivable kind of particularity, which, brought all together, constitute his identity.

This is one point of view. In one form or another, with varying degrees of passion, it has been for the past several decades, more especially in West Germany, France and Spain, pressed as strongly. against the claims of region as the claims of region were pressed in France in the middle of the nineteenth century against the overwhelming dominance of the metropolis of Paris. The essential issue was one of preservation of one's identity which was severely threatened by the huge entities of nation-state on the one hand, and of the Church on the other.

For several centuries there was a bitter struggle between the State and the Church themselves over the question as to which of the two had a superior claim to the allegiance of man. In that highly complex struggle the Church lost conclusively, giving to the Western world its distinctive modem character as regards law and politics, but the underlying issue has to this day remained unresolved quite as much in practical politics as in the various theories of it-the question of human identity. What has remained also inconclusive is the far more troublesome question whether any concept of identity can ever be a self-consistent and coherent idea.

But, coherent or not, the problem of identity, the question 'who am IT, has through the ages exercised upon the human mind a most potent force. This question, howsoever vague in its philosophical. form, becomes far more concrete in political thought when it breaks itself into two or three questions as regards the individual's exact relationship with the group, the nation and the state, and the limits of obedience and loyalty that each can demand of the individual.

The idea of 'nation', and of 'nation-state', and the practical forms which that idea acquired, are of comparatively recent origin, not more

three hundred years old. But that makes no major difference to the problem of human identity itself; the problem is only partly referred to yet another collective entity. The resolution of that m requires another prior value as regards human personality that independent of the identity which the group, the nation and the state to give to the individual.

What that prior value is, has been itself, however, a subject of intensely conflicting points of view. The result is that in the dazzlingly history of the Western political thought there is little that is capable of resolving the problem of human identity either in principle practice without maintaining that the problem itself is misconceived ,'or dispersing it altogether.

Regionalism, federalism, nationalism, and the violence which any degree of serious adherence to them entailed, are the necessary products of that absolutist tendency, manifest in the successive periods of Western history, of taking one value as supreme and subordinating everything else to it. They were a natural reaction to the tyranny of what was considered as a larger group but in actual reality was only an empty abstraction.

Thus, the rise of nationalism in Europe, finding its most philosophical support in Hegel, was a reaction against the Christian idea of a universal *ecclesia,* the universal brotherhood in Christ Jesus, on the one hand, and against the concept of universal Reason, which the philosophers of the Enlightenment were advocating, on the other hand. Rousseau despised both alike.

Regionalism was a reaction, in turn, against nation-state and nationalism, for the latter tended to disregard, in the name of nation, the independent local traditions, with their own long history, and the racial, ethnic or linguistic particularities of a local region, and the expressions they found in the literature, dance and music, folk-tales, handicrafts and forms of worship, of the local region.

Hedwig Hintze, in writing on the problem of regionalism in Europe, says: 'France as the classic land of political unity and administrative centralisation is also the classical land of regionalism, and the French regionalist movement may be used as a paradigm for regionalist movements of other lands.'

Regionalist movements have a strong presence not in France alone but also in Spain, Italy and in the United Kingdom, and their conflict with central authority remains unresolved. The related problem of minorities, and the richness of their own cultural life, in the countries of Eastern Europe remained for many decades suppressed due to the nature of communist rule there, but is erupting now with much passion. In the U.S.S.R., too, there always flowed an undercurrent of regionalism, and in the new climate of freedom is coming into full view.

What is significant is that, in the first place, all the regionalist movements in Europe invoke the common idea of human identity, not in the abstract, but in the fullness of diverse forms that it takes, and the freedom of space that it demands by right to bring it to fruition as completely as human life will permit. In the second place, given the highly centralised bureaucracies of the Church and the state, and the way in which they turned the individual into an object of cynical manipulation and control, there was every reason, historical and psychological, why the regionalist revolt should have come into being in Europe. It is not the commercial and economic interests alone that guide it; rather, it is guided primarily by a search for individual meaning.

Why is it, then, let us ask, that regionalist movements should have appeared in India as well, and taken the dreary and meaningless path of individual terrorism as they have in Punjab and in Jammu and Kashmir? Given at least four millennia of the history of Indian civilisation, always marked by its freedom to the individual to search

for the meaning of life, to discover his or her identity, in relationship or in the solitariness of his or her being, with no central religious orthodoxy to limit his or her quest, a dissent from which will mean heresy, with no state or nation to which unquestioning obedience was due, with independent traditions of local regions, India provides no ground, religious or political, for the kind of regionalist movements that have appeared in succession during the past fifty years.

Since they have taken place, the regionalist movements in India have to be understood. But in what terms? Most political commentators, who write on this subject, freely use the phrase 'religious fundamentalism' in that context. Sikh fundamentalism for the problem in Punjab; Islamic fundamentalism for the problem in Jammu and Kashmir; and although the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad are not regionalist movements, Hindu fundamentalism in regard to them.

These phrases describe little, and explain even less. I do not think I have seen anywhere in the writings of these eminent commentators any definition of 'religious fundamentalism'. Can it be seriously believed that those Sikhs, most of them very young, who have taken the desolate path of terror and violence, have done so to defend some fundamentals of Sikhism? Or that some Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir have taken the same path in order to defend the fundamentals of Islam? On the contrary. For a common fundamental tenet of Sikhism and Islam alike is raham, compassion.

Some other psychological factors seem to be then involved, however tortuous they may be. It may quite be the case that underlying the desperate acts of terror and violence in Punjab, in Jammu and Kashmir, and among the Bodos in Assam, there is an equally desperate resolve to protect a particular identity which is seen as under a threat, either imaginary or real, or partly one and partly the

other. In either case, what is required on our side is not anger, which does not help, but compassion and understanding, which may.

12

REGION, NATION AND WORLD

Question of Man's Identity

Delivered on 26 May 1990

Every form of government is based on some political philosophy; and every political philosophy has as its foundation a certain view of man and of human society. Every political revolt was preceded by a metaphysical revolt concerning what man is. Every revolution, every war, every change in government by whatever means, even by a quiet constitutional succession, sought to derive its legitimacy from what was believed to be a better and a deeper understanding of the human condition, and its energy from a moral resolve to abolish what was degrading of human worth. Every tyrant, who had come to absolute power, felt obliged to talk, howsoever cynically, of what man can be if adequately controlled.

The constitution of every modem Western nation, when it is written, unlike the case of the United Kingdom, speaks of a certain concept of man as a fundamental postulate from which everything else is derived. *The Declaration of Independence, 1776,* chiefly the work of Thomas Jefferson, states: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.' The same postulate is stated in *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens, by the National Assembly of France, 1789,* and prefixed to the French Constitution of *1791.* Described in great detail and with precision, the rights of man are also called sacred.

The Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, adopted in 1977, preserving the ideas and principles of the first Soviet constitution of 1918, then of 1924 and 1936, draws an outline, even before it speaks of other political arrangements, of 'a new historical community of people', of a particular kind of society the Soviet people wished to create. 'Guided by the ideas of scientific commu-nism and. true to their revolutionary traditions', the society which the Soviet people had created was to be 'a society of true democracy', 'a classless communist society in which there will be public, communist self-government', which is, above all, 'a society in which the law of life is concern of all for the good of each and concern of each for the good of all', providing conditions for 'the all-round development of the individual'. The Soviet constitution speaks not only of 'the nations and nationalities of the USSR', and of the Soviet state, but also of its different regions, and also of 'socialism, national liberation, democracy, and peace throughout the world.'

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949, states that 'The dignity of man shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.' What the Basic Law acknowledges to be inviolable as a consequence is the person and liberty of everyone; freedom of faith, of conscience, of creed, religious or ideological; freedom to express and disseminate freely one's opinion by speech, writing and pictures; privacy of posts and telecommunications, except that this right may be restricted only pursuant to a law; and everyone's home shall be inviolable, too. There are, besides, other basic rights, like the right to equal protection of law, right to property, and right of association. Protection of individual freedom and the dignity of man is the highest principle of German Law. At the same time, its federal character assures equal importance to different cultural traditions of different regions.

I have given these examples only to show that, whatever else the constitutional laws of a nation-state embody, they embody first and foremost certain conceptions of man and society. But that is far from settling the question of human identity. It will be argued that to do so is neither the function nor the province of a nation's constitution. That question had better be left to philosophers, novelists, poets, artists, mystics, and to film-makers; for it is they who explore the depths of the human condition.

In the first place, despite so much talk of the equality of all men, and of human freedom and dignity, and of the inalienable human rights, it was precisely these that were most jeopardised in the relatively recent history of the West. Albert Camus, in his book, *'L 'home revolted',* first published in 195 1, and translated in 195 3 into English as *The Rebel,* says: 'One might think that a period which, within fifty years, uproots, enslaves, or kills seventy million human beings, should only, and forthwith, be condemned. But also its guilt must be understood.' In his attempt to understand his times, where ideology justified mass murders, he traces the two hundred years of moral nihilism, culminating in the practice of Russian communism, in all of which the central theme was human identity and the radically changing perceptions of it.

Marxism, Camus says, the last representative of the struggle of justice against grace, takes over, without having wanted to do so, the struggle of justice against truth. 'How to live without grace-that is the question that dominates the nineteenth century.' The answer, from those who did not want to accept absolute nihilism was: 'by justice.' 'To the people who despaired of the Kingdom of Heaven',Camus argues, 'they promised the kingdom of men. The preaching of the City of Humanity increased in fervour up to the end of the nineteenth century when it became really visionary in tone and placed scientific certainties in the service of Utopia. But the kingdom has retreated

into the distance, gigantic wars have ravaged the oldest of countries of Europe, the blood of rebels has bespattered walls, and total justice has approached not a step nearer. The question of the twentieth century for which the terrorists of 1905 died and which tortures the contemporary world-has gradually been specified: how to live without grace and justice.

In the second place, their formal declaration in a constitution apart, hardly any government takes the rights of man seriously. Ronald Dworkin, an American, who succeeded H.L.A Hart as Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford, concludes, in his book, *Taking Rights* Seriously, that 'The Government will not re-establish respect for law without giving the law some claim to respect. It cannot do that if it neglects the one feature that distinguishes law from ordered brutality. If the Government does not take rights seriously, then it does not take law seriously either.'

An equally important argument which Professor Dworkin advances, which in its implications takes us beyond the Constitution of the United States of America, is that, in addition to the legal rights in the First Amendment and in the due process, equal protection, and similar clauses, every individual has inherent moral rights against the Government, and both are to be pressed in answer to the charge of civil disobedience on moral grounds; for moral rights against the state are certainly prior even to the welfare of majority. But what those moral rights are is by no means self-evident. Nor can they be specified with any degree of confidence in their universal validity until they are shown as arising from a more unified conception of human life. It is not a failure of Dworkin alone that he attempts no such thing, but, I maintain, a serious limitation of the Western traditions of political philosophy, where man is seen only in fragmented parts.

The problem of injustice, and of irrational violence against it, cannot be solved, as the social and economic realities of Indian society

will demonstrate, by a constitution alone. Having separated religion, in its deepest sense, from politics, understood only in its manipulative sense, the constitutions of most Western nations have as a consequence also separated ethics from politics, and social justice from law. The rise of nationalism everywhere has replaced the question' who am I ?' with the question 'who are we'? That question has almost always led to untruth, and then to hostility and aggression against those that are not 'us'.

Dharma as an ordering principle of life, as a unified understanding of the relation of one being with another, may still show the way. It is to that, that we must return.

13

REGION, NATION AND WORLD

Principle of Diversity in Unity

Delivered on 9 June 1990

'Region', 'nationalities', and 'nation-states', with their respective isms, regionalism, nationalism and statism, have quite dramatically come to occupy today the consciousness of the world in circumstances that are vastly different from the conditions of the past. But the underlying issue is everywhere the same as it was in the past-the paradoxical nature of the relationship which the individual has with others.

What sustains the individual can also, and indeed does, threaten his individuality to the point of reducing it as only an aid to the collective aims of the group. The issue remains unaltered, only that it becomes a little more complex, when a social group stands in the same relation to a larger social. aggregate. The issue has been between the need for security and the necessity of freedom. But must they be conflicting? Does one have to be traded for the other?

In a most substantial analysis of this subject, which appeared in serial form in the pages of the monthly review *Arya,* between the close of the year 1915 and July 1918, and later published as *The Ideal of Human Unity,* Sri Aurobindo pointed out that the idea of the state, reasserting itself after a long interval, and dominating the thought and action of the world, supports itself on two bases.

First, it appeals to the external interest of the race; and, secondly, to its highest moral tendencies. 'It demands that individual egoism shall immolate itself to a collective interest: it claims that man shall not live

for himself but for the whole, the group, the community. It asserts that the hope of the good and progress of humanity lies in the efficiency and organisation of the state.'

The state idea is rushing forward with great force and 'is prepared to crush under its wheels everything that conflicts with its force or asserts the right of other human tendencies', 'And yet the two ideas on which it bases itself are', Sri Aurobindo says, 'full of that fatal mixture of truth and falsehood which pursues all our human claims and assertions.'

Sri Aurobindo's argument is that it is quite immaterial to the principle what form the state may assume. Whether it is the tyranny of the absolute king over all, or the tyranny of the majority over the individual, 'which really converts itself by the paradox of human nature into a hypnotised oppression and repression of the majority by itself', they are forms of one and the same tendency.

'Each when it declares itself to be the state with its absolute "L'etat, c'est moi, is speaking a profound truth even while it bases that truth upon a falsehood', Sri Aurobindo says. 'The truth is that each really is the self-expression of the state in its characteristic attempt to subordinate to itself the free will, the free action, the power, dignity and self-assertion of the individuals constituting it. The falsehood lies in the underlying idea that the state is something greater than the individuals constituting it and can with impunity for itself and to the highest hope of humanity arrogate this oppressive supremacy.'

It is with the individual as the irreducible unit of human existence, and with his creative development, that Sri Aurobindo is most concerned. It is around the relation of the individual with family, clan, tribe, nation, the state, and then with the whole of humanity that his thoughts revolve. Of these, he finds the idea of the state and its huge organisation as profoundly destructive of the individual.

The organised state, in Sri Aurobindo's view, is neither the best mind of the nation nor is it even the sum of the communal energies. It is a 'collective egoism much inferior to the best of which the community is capable'. Therefore, he argues, when the state demands that the individual immolate himself on its altar, and give up the freedom of his self into an organised collective activity, this demand is to be distinguished from the demand of our highest ideals.

It amounts to the giving up of the present form of individual egoism into another, a collective form, which is decidedly larger but not superior, which is in fact in many ways even inferior to the best individual egoism. This is not to say, Sri Aurobindo argues, that the altruistic ideal, the discipline of self-sacrifice, the need of a growing solidarity with our fellows, and a growing collective soul in humanity, are in dispute. 'But the loss of self in the state', he concludes, 'is not the thing that these high ideals mean, nor is it the way to their fulfilment.'

If Sri Aurobindo repudiates altogether the state idea, or regards it at its best as only an element in human life and growth, he finds the idea of nation a far more natural one. He draws a sharp distinction between the two. According to him, the state tends always to uniformity, because uniformity is easy to it, and natural variation is impossible to its essentially mechanistic nature; but uniformity is death, not life.

He maintains, therefore, a national culture, a national religion, a national education may still be useful things-provided they do not interfere with the growth of human solidarity or with individual freedom of thought and conscience: but a state education, a state religion, a state culture are in his view, 'unnatural violences.'

As between nation and region, the underlying issue, according to Aurobindo, is whether huge social aggregates, closely united and strictly organised, are conducive to a richer, happier, and more fruitful individual and collective life? On that issue he favours small spaces

where human life expresses itself in its infinite variety and with concentrated energy of human creativity. Collective life diffusing itself in too vast spaces seems to lose intensity and productiveness.

History supports this conclusion, according to Aurobindo. He says that modem Europe owes two-thirds of its civilisation to the religious life of the tribes that called themselves Israel, subsequently to the little nation of the Jews; to the many-sided life of the small Greek city states; and to the artistic and intellectual life of medieval Italy.

Likewise there was no age in Asia so rich in energy, so well worth living in, so productive of the best and most enduring fruits as that heroic period in India when it was divided into small kingdoms, many of them no larger than a modem district. In comparison, he says, India received little from the greater empires that rose and fell within its borders, the Moghul, the Gupta or the Maurya.

Equally important is his view, which is indisputably true, that 'uniformity is not the law of life. Life exists by diversity; it insists that every group, every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique.'

But in Sri Aurobindo's thought the issue between the individual and the group remains. He concludes *The Ideal of Human Unity* by saying: 'There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellowmen is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness, be founded.'

At the same time he also maintains: 'The state idea, the small or the vast living machine, and the human idea, the more and more distinct and luminous person, the increasing God, stand in perpetual opposition. It was the family, the tribe or the city, the polis, it became the clan, the caste and the class, the kula, the *gens.* It is now the

nation. Tomorrow or the day after it may be all mankind. But even then the question will remain poised between man and humanity, between the self-liberating person and the engrossing collectivity.'

That clears the ground for us to discover afresh, even as human life is rooted in them, the Dharmic answers to the question of man's identity.

14

REGION, NATION AND WORLD

View from a Dharmic Perspective

Delivered on 23 June 1990

Given the highly centralised bureaucracies of the church and the state, with their unwavering belief in the truth of their perceptions of human fife, resulting in their resolute suppression of the diversity of life's expressions, there is every reason why the regionalist revolt should have come into being in Europe and in the Soviet Union. Region in conflict with the nation, and the nation in conflict with the world, are inherent in the logic of the Western political thought.

Secondly, rooted in the deepest respect for the diversity of life, with no central orthodoxy, with independent traditions of local regions adding in different ways to all that was noble and magnificent in India, it offers no ground, historical or psychological, to the violence of regional revolt in this country. Why has it, then, come about in India?

Thirdly, all regionalist revolts, wherever they are, invoke the common idea of a specific human identity, and the freedom of space that by right it demands to bring it to fruition as fully as humanly possible. The question of identity is the first and foremost issue, which involves emotions, and not only the question of economic opportunities and gains.

And, fourthly, every form of government is based on some political philosophy, which has as its foundation a certain view of man and society. That has a logic of its own, relentlessly at work, in ways that are sometimes clear and at other times hidden.

The underlying logic of Western thought has been one of making sharp distinctions, confining everything to its defined space, separating, dividing, setting up boundaries that became high walls, jurisdictions where each becomes in itself a world. Religion, in its deepest sense, was separated from politics, politics from ethics, and social justice from law. Eventually the religious impulse and the human cry for social justice became subordinate to what was put forth as the higher collective purposes of the nation-state.

The logic of Dharmic thought has been radically different. In that logic, because it is derived from actual reality, there are no absolute distinctions, nor boundaries that are unalterable, nor definitions that are beyond change. There is nothing that is wholly separate from the rest, nor is there anything that is wholly one with the rest; physical reality itself is indeterminate; things are separate but interconnected.

With Independence when India, from being a part of a foreign empire, became a nation-state, and acquired full control of the apparatus of the state, it accepted uncritically also the various assumptions on which that apparatus was built. Those assumptions,whether of liberal individualism or of socialism, shared alike the logic of Western 'political thought. That logic was completely at variance with the logic of Indian thought. And those assumptions which we made the foundation of the Indian republic, measured human life in proportions, both of time and space, that were wholly different from those of Dharmic civilisation.

The result has been a frightfully deep and wide division between the political conceptions that govern the people of India and the ethical and spiritual values which determine the course of their lives even today. The successive developments in the history of the industrialised West, engulfing the individual ever more, arose naturally from their underlying logic: in India, given the Dharmic measure of human

existence, the dreadful violence of regionalist revolt is entirely unnatural and can make no sense at all.

That violence is resolute and has become a daily affair, bringing into the lives of countless families sorrow and meaningless anguish. It is legitimate to conclude that it does not arise from any part of the history of Indian civilisation. Its source lies elsewhere-in the exceedingly limited concept of 'nation', or 'nation-state', derived from the vocabulary of the Western political thought, with consequently wrong attitudes towards the regions that have for thousands of centuries added to the oneness of Dharmic civilisation.

This will become perfectly clear if we were to study, in the context of this discussion alone, the *Mahabharata,* its *Vanaparva* in particular. Even a plain reading of the text, and its manifest structure, will make indisputably clear at least four characteristics of that sense of *belonging* which bound together in a common civilisation the diverse peoples that inhabited what the *Mahabharata* describes as Bharatavarsha.

First of all, the belonging was not primarily in political terms. Nor was it ever in terms of some religion. The binding, the belonging, was at all times secured in terms of *Dharma,* which carried as a part of its meaning the political, and also that unceasing search for the meaning of life which is what the religious truly is; but these were only parts of a unified order where everything was connected with everything else, and nothing ever of such value as to dominate the rest.

Nor was the belonging generated from the possession of a common territory. The belonging was not merely 'national', and the national was not merely a product of the ownership of a specific territory. The *Mahabharata* invokes, rather, the natural dependence which all living beings have on mother earth, and therefore the idea of right relationship between man and earth or *bhumi.* The desire for

more and more territory can only lead to strife between one nation and another, the *Bhishma-parva* says, even as dogs fight over a piece of meat. In sharpest contrast to the Western attitudes to land and earth,'those of exploitation and control,the second distinguishing feature of Dharmic binding is the sense of the sacred in relation to the earth and the generosity of her yielding.

Thirdly, the belonging arose from the myths and parables of the people of India, which they linked with their mountains, hills, rivers, lakes, trees and woods and forests, birds and animals. Geography was not an inert and frightening mass of nature. Every bit of it was invested with meaning and brought into intimate relation with the everyday life of the people. The birds and animals were included in human discourse and were a part of that intelligence that seeks the true measure of life.

This the *Vana-parva of* the *Mahabharata* achieves, unlike anything that was ever achieved by any other civilisation, by a literary device of inspired imagination. On losing to the Katiravas in a game of dice, and as a consequence banished from the realm for thirteen years, divested *of* their vast empire, the five Pandava brothers and their wife, Draupadi, struggle to understand their new situation. That raises a variety of questions concerning the nature *of* human existence in all its concreteness. Regaining their inner balance, they set off, with sage Lomash as their guide, on a pilgrimage, *tirtha-yatra, of* the numerous sacred places *of* India. As the journey progresses, the discussion unfolds, new questions arise, and with them new doubts. The aim of the *yatra* is not to gain merit but understanding.

It becomes a vast inquiry into the human condition, where it is as important, for instance, to explore the nature of sexual energy as it is important to explore the meaning of death. In conversation with sages and philosophers, kings and commoners, every aspect of human life comes under a searching examination.

What is explored, above all, is the tension between one and the many, the local and the universal, the functional and the ethical, between that which passes and that which abides. The Vana- parva contains the greater part of the most central myths and parables of

India, the medium of discussion of the perennial questions of life, which were linked with some mountain, or hill, or river, or lake, and those with human consciousness. The conclusion of every myth in the *Mahabharata* is a profoundly universal idea concerning man. The national, in Dharmic thought, reaches out to the universal.

But that reaching out, paradoxically, has always been through the diversity of India's regional life. That is the fourth distinguishing feature of the Indian sense of belonging to a common civilisation. For diversity is not the enemy of unity.

15

REGION, NATION AND WORLD

Balance between Self and Society

Delivered on 7July 1990

All regionalist movements base themselves on the idea of a separate identity, which is a contradiction in terms; for the word 'identity' means the very opposite, 'the quality or condition of being the same; absolute or essential sameness; oneness.' In logic, the law of identity, one of the three celebrated laws of thought, simply states: a thing is what it is. In other words, the concept of identity implies neither separation from, nor opposition to, anything. But that is precisely what it has come to mean.

It is strange, but nonetheless true, that a wrong understanding has its own logic, which remorselessly works itself in different ways. If I understand myself with reference to what I am not, and with reference to that alone, then I have already set up a negative logic. Separation must lead to fear, fear to distrust, distrust to division, division to hostility, and hostility to violence. In this logic your truth is not my truth, and my truth is the only truth. If you believe in my truth, you are my brother; and my truth is not really my truth in the sense that it is a product of my mind; I have received it from an ancient tradition, which received it directly from God; all I am asking you to do is to accept God's truth. In this logic the plurality of life's ways are the ways of confusion, and diversity is disunity.

This logic has been at work in Indian society, too, more fiercely today, perhaps, than at other times; and yet, everything in Dharmic

thought, and a great portion of actual living in India, had always pointed to the very opposite.

The question of identity was inquired into, always, in the form *'who am IT* And never in the form, 'who are we?' This must not lead to the conclusion that it was an individualistic inquiry and that India had neglected to inquire into the nature of social life. It only means that the question 'who *am IT* is prior to any question of social organisation. It must lead to society but from a different centre.

That question formed the main substance of Dharmic philosophy. There were different answers to it, some of them radically opposed to each other. Whereas a great many schools of philosophy came to the conclusion that human identity was defined in terms of an unchanging entity, *atman,* the Buddhists held that nowhere could such an entity be seen, for demonstrably everything in life was changing continuously, nothing was permanent, everything was in a flux.

It must not be supposed that these were matters of abstract speculation only. On the contrary, they had profound social implications, leading to diverse attitudes to the concrete problems of human life. Yet they all converged on to a common ethical ground of one man's relationship with another. The abiding elements of it were *maitri,* friendship, and *karuna,* or compassion. It did not matter whether you reached it from the side of the Vedanta or from the side of Buddhism.

The most characteristic part of Dharmic civilisation has been, and can be seen today in the lives of a vast number of men and women in India, that one's identity did not at all imply separation from, or opposition to something other. The creation of Pakistan was on the basis that it did. The argument was that Muslims are separate from Hindus, because of their different religions, and therefore they are separate nations, and Muslims must have their separate homeland by a division of India, where they could bring their identity to its fruition.

That a space created out of a negative logic must ever be a space not of happiness and self-fulfilment but of hostility to what one has separated from, is proved by the fact that, within forty years, India and Pakistan were at war with each other three times.

Dharmic civilisation has had its roots in diversity, not as some political choice, but as a happy acknowledgment of an evident law of life. Life must by its very nature be local, with its local colours, local sounds, and local scents. For that reason it must have diversity of expression, in the architecture of buildings, handicrafts, literature, music and dance. Customs and daily living must be diverse, even as the weather and land are diverse. The law of dh*armasastra* never applied uniformly to the whole of India, it could not. What pervaded was the spirit of *dharma* and not the letter of *shastra.* What pervaded, above all, was the truth that neither is the local an enemy of the universal, nor is diversity the enemy of unity.

If one inquires as to the substance, the underlying structure, of this whole debate about region, nation and world, that has gone on for several centuries, one will discover that it is all about the relationship between the individual space and social space, the space of one's inner being and the space of the world. In Dharmic thought one does not negate the other. Rather, through successive stages of perception, they come to be seen what they are-one whole reality.

A most powerful physical representation of this view of man and the world is seen in the architecture of temples in Tamil Nadu. They have one common feature, especially among the major temples. The temple itself is raised on a high stone plinth which, then, is set in a vast space bordered on all the four sides by high walls. Within the temple the space gets progressively smaller, and the idol of the deity is located in the smallest space of all

The grandeur of the space outside and the concentrated smallness of the space within are mutually related in a symbolical meaning. The

movement to the innerness of the individual is through the vast social space of the world: and it is from the concentrated inwardness of one's self that one reaches out in a reverse movement to the world. It is not until one has seen those temples, particularly the Srirangam at Tiruchi, the Brihadeshwar at Thanjavur, and the temples at Tiruvidaimarudur, Darasuram and Gangaikonda-cholapuram, all in Thanjavur district,that one can at all understand what that means.

Translated into social and political terms, since the temple was also asocial institution, it means that social harmony must at an times flow from a right relationship between the individual and any social aggregate, society, nation, or nation-state. The definition of right relationship was that of balance. *Dharma* as law was the way of achieving balance between the two; for *Dharma* was not simply legislated law but also the law of one's inner being. The latter had its local and universal content, there being no antagonism between the two, not in principle at any rate. Without the individual inner balance, any political space, created as an outward instrument, must generate unbalance of every kind. That that is what it almost always does, is witnessed by history.

The world today is seeking a new understanding of freedom. Human freedom is not an easy state to achieve. Political and economic freedom, until they are accompanied by at least some measure of freedom from the desire to dominate others, in the name either of truth or of national interest, remain generally like other forms of slavery.

16

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Delivered on 4 August 1990

It is a sign of the modem age in which we live that truth, like so much else in human life, is fragmented, broken into unrelated parts. There h objective truth, and there is subjective truth, the truth of the scientist, and the truth of the poet. The truth with which law courts are concerned is only truth as evidence, or that truth which is inferred or reconstructed from evidence; but the evidence that is legally permissible is defined so narrowly that truth is very nearly the last thing that it can manifest. The politician's truth is truth as power: whatever helps secure power and its fruits, is truth; all else is illusion. The truth of the novelist, or the story-teller, is neither the rational truth, nor the truth that is susceptible to legal evidence, nor the truth as power, not even truth as fact alone, but the truth as drives and appetites and motives and their tangled web. Something of the human truth emerges from each of these, but it does so in such a way that it remains fragmented, not whole, the truth of fragmented minds, fragmented lives.

A great many people believe that the question of truth is for the philosophers to agonise about and for the prophets to answer. Yet, in the everyday lives of these very people, there can, perhaps, hardly ever be a day when in one context or the other they do not wonder about the truth of a thing that touches them directly. It need not be an overwhelming event such as the death of a child due to suspected negligence at a public hospital, but something altogether simple such

as the genuineness of what one is buying, which brings up the question of truth.

Behind every political ideology, behind every policy and act of Government, behind every economic principle and activity, there lies similarly the question of their truth. That question is absolutely suppressed by totalitarian governments and systematically taken up in societies that are governed democratically; but it is in the nature of government, totalitarian or democratic, to fear the question of truth the most. It may be argued that the truth involved in the questions of a political and economic kind is vastly different from the truth about the ends of life or about man's place in the universe, and therefore the consideration of the one need not involve a resolution of the other. It will be not only legitimate but thoroughly sensible to fragment one from the other, for they have in any case two separate universes of discourse.

The argument is quite simply answered by the historical fact that every form of government, imperialism included, invoked in the first place a particular world view as its foundation, which had as its elements the assumed truths of such cosmic categories as the purpose of history, or the will of God, or the responsibility of a more civilised race towards a less civilised one, or all of them together. The point is: the foundations of every government are in a civilisation. And since every civilisation has a particular understanding of truth, the question as to what truth is becomes of greatest importance.

Pontius Pilate had asked Jesus: 'What is truth?', and Jesus did not answer that question. A millennium earlier in India, the *Ishavasya-upanishad* had concluded that 'the face of truth is covered with a blindingly brilliant golden disc.' The accompanying prayer was: 'may that golden disc be removed, so that man can see truth.' It was in Dharmic civilisation more than in any other that the question, 'what is truth?', was discussed in very great detail, and nowhere in greater

detail than in the *Mahabharata.* The setting of the story itself was perfect for that discussion, which takes place when every major figure in the story was taking recourse to untruth and lies in order to win the war, and the war was the setting for a discussion on *ahimsa,* or non violence and love.

Three points chiefly emerge from the *Mahabharata* discussion on truth. First, the truth is the highest of all *dharmas;* secondly, truth is relative to time and place and the person concerned; and, thirdly, truth is not merely correspondence with facts but as the actual living of a life that was not fragmented in unrelated parts, but was lived in the wholeness of one's right relationship with oneself and one's right relationship with other beings.

The M*ahabharata* says: 'Everything is founded upon truth. Untruth is darkness, and darkness takes people down. What is truth is also order, what is order is also light, and what is light is also happiness; what is untruth is disorder, what is disorder is darkness, what is darkness is suffering.' The *Tirukkural* says: 'All lamps are not lamps; the lamp of truth is the lamp of the wise.'

How could truth be conditional, relative to place and time? Whatever is conditional is a function of something else. If truth were a function of time and place, then, like them, truth must forever be shifting. In that case, history, and not truth should have been the Dharmic apotheosis. But here the proposition was: 'everything in the world is a mixture of truth and untruth.' As to the question: what is truth? and what is untruth?, the answer was that it is indeed difficult to determine this. Bhishma, however, suggests that 'where truth turns into untruth, it is better not to speak the truth, for there untruth acts as truth. One who can discriminate between the relative value of truth and untruth, he alone understands *dharma.'*

These propositions were still ambiguous; for it remained to be explained what was it that could turn truth into untruth. What was

required was a principle of the highest order, to which truth must be subordinate, and of which place and time were themselves aspects. The *Mahabharata* states that principle to be reverence for life. Hence the dictum: 'If by speaking a lie, a life is protected, then speak the lie; for there the lie becomes the truth, and there the truth will be untruth.' The underlying principle, according to the *Mahabharata,* is: 'What is truth only formally in speech, is not necessarily truth; one should discriminate between truth and untruth with regard to their effect.'

But relativism might easily degenerate into opportunism, into unprincipled self-seeking, where what was Palpably wrong would be sought to be justified on one ground or another, in bad faith. It was for this reason that the *Mahabharata* had subjected the relativity of ethical norms to a larger context of reverence for life.

In answer to the question, 'What is truth and what are its predicates?', the *Mahabharata* speaks of thirteen characteristics of truth. Including itself as. a predicate, they are: equality, self-control, absence of envy, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, not to find faults with others, renunciation, concentration of mind, nobility of conduct, forbearance, and non-violence. Each one of them was defined clearly. Although mentioned as distinct, they were regarded as aspects of one indivisible whole. That is the reason why each one of them is connected with the rest and invariably includes the rest. Truth is indivisible. And, in its essence, so is *dharma.*

Once that is understood, then Bhishma's consistent advocacy of the relativistic nature of truth would not seem at variance with his own last words---------'Exert in truth, for truth is the greatest force."

17

PLAUSIBILITY AND TRUTH

Mandal's View of Social History

Delivered on 12 September 1990

Plausibility is almost always the enemy of truth. There is hardly any public document of recent times in India that illustrates this better, and more tragically, than the report of the Mandal Commission. The commission was instituted to look into the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes, and after defining such classes, to recommend steps that could be taken for their advancement. The commission gave its report on these matters in December 1980. Its central proposal has now become law, and 27 per cent of all public appointments in the Central government, and in other institutions managed by it, shall be reserved for the citizens identified on the basis of their low caste as socially and educationally backward classes.

Of the three issues that occupied the commission, the one that was of the greatest moment to it was: whether the social and educational backwardness of certain classes of the Indian people was owing directly to the Hindu caste system., or whether there might be other causes of it, the generally poor economic condition of the people for instance. The Mandal Commission firmly concluded that the former and not the latter was the case. In this regard it made six assumptions about Indian social history, which are also the very heart of its Report. Those assumptions are as follows:

First, castes, the building bricks of Hindu social structure, fragmented the social consciousness of Hindu society by dividing it into

numerous groups arranged in a hierarchical order on the basis of birth.

Secondly, the real triumph of the caste system lies not in upholding the supremacy of the Brahmin, but in conditioning the consciousness of lower castes in accepting their inferior status in the ritual hierarchy as a part of the natural order of things.

Thirdly, it was through an elaborate, complex and subtle scheme of scripture, mythology and ritual that Brahminism succeeded in giving to the caste system, and to its inequality and discrimination towards the majority of the people, a moral and divine authority that has seldom been challenged effectively, even by the most ardent social reformers.

Fourthly, as exclusive custodians of higher knowledge, the Brahmins developed into a highly cultivated community with a special flair for intellectual pursuits: the Sudras, continually subjected to all kinds of deprivation, acquired all the unattractive traits of the unlettered rustic.

Fifthly, if religion was ever used as the opium of the masses, it was done in India, where a small priest-class hypnotised the vast majority of the people into accepting with humility their role of servility. As labourers, cultivators, craftsmen, the Sudras were the life-blood of India's great civilisation, yet they were treated as outcastes with no hope.

Finally, Islam and Christianity, unlike Hinduism, are totally egalitarian religions. If they, too, are infested in varying degrees with caste, the fault lies not in their religious ideals but in the fact that they were surrounded by caste-based Hinduism. Caste cannot be, therefore, the basis for identifying socially and educationally backward classes among the Muslims and Christians of India. For them some other rough and ready criterion of backwardness must be found.

To the Mandal. Commission, whose exact words are reproduced above, these were, of course, not assumptions but establish facts. To prove this it assembled what on first sight would appear to be altogether a formidable apparatus of scholarly opinion and scientific method. But if you look at it closely, you will soon discover that there is little in it that supports the assumptions which the commission. made. Nor is there anything in the published works of the Indian sociologists it has so cheerfully quoted, Professor M N Srinivas, to take one example, from which can be drawn anything like the portrait the Mandal Commission drew of Hindu society. But when untruth is presented in the clothes of scholarship, the damage it can do to the minds of the people is simply incalculable, for it seems so eminently plausible.

What the Mandal. Commission actually did in its report was to resurrect, practically word for word, the early British missionary denunciation of India and its people. That phase of abusive Christianity, without question a contradiction in terms, lasted for a century, from 1813, the year in which the East India Company reluctantly opened India to British missionaries, to 1910, when the World Missionary Conference met at Edinburgh. By that time it had become evident that abuse would not do. The conference admitted that "more harm has been done in India than in any other country by missionaries who have lacked the wisdom to appreciate the nobler side of the religion which they have laboured so indefatigably to supplant."

In maintaining that castes had fragmented the social consciousness of Hindu society by dividing it into numerous groups, what the Mandal Commission did was to resurrect also the exact argument of British rule that since India was not socially cohesive, with whom the British government could negotiate as regards the Indian demand for greater Indian participation in making laws and in the administration of

their country. This question came up again and again-until the division of India and independence from British rule. The plausibility of the British-Mandal view, concealing its untruth, has had tragic consequences for the people of India. –

Above all, in maintaining that the social and educational backwardness of a vast number of the people of India, flowed from the caste system, what the Mandal Commission did was to resurrect the famous controversy on this subject between Bhimrao Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. The most central part of the commission's report is also a complete paraphrase of what Ambedkar had said, with unrestrained anger, about the caste system as a whole and not only about its historical disorders, in an undelivered speech prepared for the 1936 conference of the Jat Pat Todak Mandal. (or, translated into English, the Society for the Abolition of Castes). This was published by him soon thereafter, and reviewed by Gandhi in the *Harijan* in July, 1936.

The issue between Ambedkar and Gandhi remained unresolved because the issue itself was wrongly formulated. It continues to be formulated wrongly even today. The main question is not whether the concepts of *varna and jati* (or caste proper) are synonymous or in theory opposed to each other (this engaged Bhirnrao and Gandhi). Nor is the key question whether the advocacy of a man always following his ancestral calling, said to be an essential feature of the caste system, was also an essential part of the *dharma-sastras.*

The Mahatma maintained that it was, and there was nothing objectionable in it. To Ambedkar it was 'not only an impossible and impractical ideal, but it is also morally an indefensible ideal.' Both of them should have known the established fact of Indian history that the Brahmins often took to arms and became kings, the Kshattriyas sometimes became philosophers and spiritual teachers, and the Sudras were as often kings, and also great teachers of *dharma.*

Bhimrao Ambedkar expressed a profound truth when he said: 'lle best of men cannot be moral if the basis of relationship between them and their fellows is fundamentally a wrong relationship.' That truth is a Dharmic truth and has been at the very centre of Indian civilisation. Whatever was a negation of the right law of relationship between one man and the other, and between man and other beings, was *adharma.*. The way the caste system threatened to develop, as it seemed to have in the times even of the *Mahabharata,* was *adharma.* That remained so throughout the unequivocal Dharmic tradition, in the M*ahabharata* most of all. But one must first seriously try to understand what the Dharmic: ideal of human relationships was, and then judge all social facts of today M that light. A steadfast refusal to do so, manifest in the Mandal report, and also in much of the modem scholarship relating to India, can only produce errors of perception, and then unhappiness and suffering.

18

INDIAN NATIONALISM

Borrowed Ideas, Ironies, Violence

In a Buddhist text by Sangharaksha, translated into Chinese at the beginning of the fifth century, a question is asked: how can he who practises meditation rid himself of attention to nationality? The answer is as follows.

'A man possessed of wisdom ought not to fix his thoughts upon such a subject. Even if a country is fertile, happy and peaceful, so long as passions are still at work there, the mind will produce misery and pain. Such a country cannot really be called good. Only a country that can get rid of these sundry evils, pare away the bonds of passion and so free the mind from distress-only such a country can be called a good country.'

The truth of these words is manifest in the history of nationalism anywhere, but nowhere more, perhaps, than in the history of Indian nationalism which from its beginning was involved, moreover, in a curious Paradox. Nationalism arises in India not in response to any inner impulse of Indian society but as a Western graft. An outcome of a variety of very complex political and economic and emotional factors to which German romanticism had contributed greatly, nationalism had become by the nineteenth century a dominant passion of Europe. That passion was introduced into India artificially. Much of -the Western history of nationalism came to be grafted upon Indian society whose traditions and values were rooted not in the concept of nationality, or *rashtra,* but in the idea of *dharma,* and the understanding of social relation ships that followed from it.

Nationalism as a feeling, an upsurge, and not simply as a political theory, arose from the teachings of Gottfried von Herder

(1744-1803), with whom begins the German romantic movement. It was in opposition to the Enlightenment view of history, that there are rational and universal laws of historical development, that Herder had propounded the view that it is precisely in its unique past, in its particular traditions,, that a people, 'volk', a nation, would find its identity, its particular genius, as a guide to its future. The issue was, between the particularity of feeling and emotion, or self-consciousness of a nation and the assumed universality of the Enlightenment idea of history.

Marxism was an offspring of the Enlightenment. Hence its resolute anti-national temper. Hence also its determined opposition to anything that seemed to be romantic. The nationalists and the Marxists would despise each other. Communism would suppress, mostly by violence, all forms of nationalism until, in a high wave of passion for national life, as happened in the countries of Eastern Europe, communism would be swept aside as a doctrine of lifeless, colourless, false universalism.

Nationalism in the West would perform two related functions. Within the nation, it would suppress diversity and bring in its place a unified expression of distinctive national life. And, united within, it would measure the strength of one's nation against another. It would create a powerful feeling of *we* and *they,* and appeal to it in all moments of social crisis. Marxism would do the same except that the *we* and *they* of Marxism were very different from that of nationalism. Both would divide mankind into perpetually hostile and warring groups.

Introduced into India, they would do no less. Nationalism and Marxism, each in its own way, would seek to recreate in Indian society much of the Western political history. Since that history was an outcome of numerous conflicting views of the human condition, although they all were located in a common logical framework of

either/or, each would seek to place Indian society in that framework of thinking.

It is not a coincidence in time that the Muslim League came into existence in the same year in which the Hindu Mahasabha was established, 1906. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded in the same year, 1925, in which the Communist Party of India was born. But, causally connected or not, their simultaneous advent would now seem to be an invisible herald of conflicts that would touch Indian society very deeply. In relation to each other they would be the ideological *other.* The philosophical framework in which the Western thinking is grounded requires the existence of the ideological *other* as a necessary condition of defining one's self. Hindu nationalism and Marxism have created in India that entity. What have been its results? Discord,conflict, and violence.

There was another factor in the rise of nationalism in India which we must consider. With a few exceptions, the British, historians and rulers alike, advanced the thesis that India was never one nation, but only a conglomeration of different peoples with no common past, colliding with each other in the present, with no vision of a common future. It was a land inhabited by peoples that were divided in every conceivable way. Not merely a theory, it was connected with a practical question of imperial politics: who represents India?

Nationalism arises in India to disprove that British contention and to neutralise its political implications. In other words, it arises in no deeper impulse than to prove that we were what they were. It can be said with perfect justice that, however unconsciously, the agenda of Indian nationalism was set by British rule. What were the results of that inauthentic step? Paradoxes, ironies and violence.

For the process of disproving the British contention that India was never a united society and a nation, soon became the process of proving it. The creation of Pakistan was one tragic proof provided by

Indian society itself that Indian nationalism was a myth. The same proof took numerous other forms, many of them official policies. In the place of common bonds and common duties, that had sustained the people of India in a togetherness for countless centuries, what was now promoted was the spirit of separateness-separate rights, separate interests, separate futures. With national unity as its goal, Indian nationalism would produce much disunity.

It would avow with passion, in Sri Aurobindo's words as its essence, that 'the return to ourselves is the cardinal feature of the national movement. It is national not only in the sense of political self assertion against the domination of foreigners, but in the sense of a return upon our old national individuality', a return to 'the spirit of Indianity', to 'the magic of her thought and civilisation'. But the interpretation of that individuality, or that spirit, or that magic, would create fear and dispute.For they would be interpreted as being Hindu. Indian nationalism would be perceived as Hindu nationalism. The Indian Muslims, the Indian Christians, Sikhs, and the Untouchables led by Ambedkar, would seek separate safeguards against the eventual majority rule of the Hindus.

Nehru earlier talked of 'Hindu and Muslim and Sikh nationalisms' and dismissed them as 'religious and communal', or in a muddle of political vocabulary, called them 'group nationalisms'. 'Being essentially a middle class movement, Nehru would say, 'nationalism works chiefly in the interests of that class.' Led by M.N. Roy, at least in the beginning, the Marxists would see in Indian nationalism the attempt of the new Indian bourgeoisie to replace the British bourgeoisie and proceed to exploit the poor. They would denounce the spirituality of ancient Indian culture, propagated by Tilak and Aurobindo, as a means of keeping the masses in ignorance and poverty.

Applying the Western criteria of nationhood,Golwalkar would declare: 'In this land of ours,Bharat, the national life is of the Hindu people. In short, this is the Hindu nation.' Influenced entirely by Herder, he would raise 'nation' as an absolute value. He would create a new *Makti,* as *rashtrabhakti,* or 'devotion to nation', and would tal of 'Nation-God'. None of this formed any part whatsoever of Dharmic thought. He would talk of the Hindus as 'the chosen people', for they are chosen for a divine task. But at no time in its very long history had Dharmic civilisation even remotely made any such claim. It is a Semitic, not Dharmic, idea. Nor did that civilisation know of the words 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism'. However, if the truth of Hindu nationalism is assumed, then the demand for Pakistan could not be denied. It was a logical culmination, even before it was an emotional culmination, of the false doctrine of Hindu nationalism.

19

MAX WEBER'S WRONG UNDERSTANDING OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

Published in *Recent Research on Max Weber's Studies of Hinduism,* ed. Dedef Kantowsky (Munich, Weitforum Verlag, 1986), being a collection of some of the papers presented at the Seminar 'Max Weber's study of Hinduism and Buddhism', organised by the Goethe Institute and others, New Delhi:, 1-3 March 1984. pp 4558.

The only liberty I have taken with the text as published, for the sake of easy readability and consistency of form, is to put all Sanskrit words in italics, as also the works referred to. For example, *dharma* in place of dharma, as in the German edition.

Max Weber was one of the most magnificent minds of the twentieth century. Although his influence was not as spectacular as that of Karl Marx, his range of intellect, as well as his capacity to see connections among maddeningly diverse social facts, was infinitely more impressive than that of Marx. Weber's contribution to our understanding of modem Western capitalism and its religious foundations acquires a heroic character in the light of the fact that, at one point of his very productive life, he suffered a most dreadful nervous collapse, caused no doubt by the very intensity of his intellectual striving. His work on India is astonishingly deep in many of its insights; astonishingly so because he was not an Indologist, did not know Sanskrit, like Max Mueller he never visited India, and yet he seems to have had a far more comprehensive view of Indian civilization than Max Mueller or any other German Indologist, with the notable exception of Betty Heimann.

There are two different ways in which Max Weber's work on India may be discussed. One may ignore the larger framework of his studies of which it was a part, examine on their own grounds the numerous single conclusions he reached regarding the character of the social and religious institutions of Indian society, and show those conclusions to be either right or wrong, but without tracing them to his central presuppositions concerning India. This, as far as I know, is the method that has generally been followed by those in India who have responded to Weber. In such a method one may dispute the truth of any or all of his single conclusions and still keep his presuppositions as they were. It ends, at best, on a note of debate and does not advance the understanding of Indian culture.

Or one may show how Max Weber did not do what he set out to do in the first place, i.e. to investigate the religious factors in India that prevented the growth of rational capitalism which the Protestant ethic had helped develop in the modem West; examine his work irrespective of that question, for that work had anyway turned into an independent examination of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism; and then demonstrate how from the start it suffered from a most crippling error, so that the question really is less that of the truth or falsehood of his single conclusions, and more that of the truth or falsehood of the very presuppositions with which he viewed India, given which, the rest logically followed. This is what I propose to do. In this way it is possible to admire most genuinely his many insights into India but show that they were all covered, however, with an essentially mistaken view. And if I am right, it follows that not until those presuppositions are given up completely, can there be hope of satisfactorily understanding Indian civilization.

To do that is not to devalue Weber's perception of India wholesale, but to clear the ground to see that all single definite statements about Indian culture will, unless they are balanced by their

opposites, remain

incomplete, and therefore misleading. And that is because ancient Indians had seen human reality manifest at so many different levels that they had naturally also acquired the most lucid habit of seeing with many eyes and speaking with many tongues.

Although Weber extended the fundamental quest of *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* to Asiatic cultures, no sooner had he entered upon Indian ground than he was diverted away from it. After the first few pages of his book on India very little remains of the main question with which he begins: in what manner did Indian religion prevent capitalistic development in the Western sense? Particularly when a great many factors that had produced modern Western capitalism, such as a long history of capitalist trade, state coinage, a market economy, a very well-formed class both of traders and artisans, state protection and patronage of them, and above all, an almost overwhelming valuation of riches and money, had been present in India as well. To be sure, that question does not altogether disappear, only it no longer seems to occupy a central place in Weber's thoughts on India. His work became so intense, and so very detailed that he seemed to have been bewitchingly drawn deeper and deeper into what he called the magical garden of Indian religion. And towards the end, when he attributes the lack of the 'spirit of capitalism' in Indian society to the absence in it of 'a rational practical ethic', because the world had been radically devalued, it is impossible for one to believe that the inspiration behind Weber's journeys into Indian thought was merely to connect the two. This is quite apart from the question whether Indian society was in fact wanting in a rational practical ethic, or in the spirit of capitalism, and even if it were, whether there was any connection at all between the two, at any rate the kind of connection he argued that there was. Weber's critique of Hinduism and Buddhism was so penetrating, quite unlike anything that had been attempted by German Indologists before, that the only

thing to do that would be properly respectful to him is to assess the truth or falsehood of the presuppositions that inform his entire perception of Indian civilization.

Here I can do no more than indicate Weber's central error. That error can be stated very simply. It consisted in his assumptions that there is something called Hinduism, that Hinduism is the national form of Indian religion, that Indian civilization is religious in all its movements and, its chief direction being other-worldly, that it is radically world-denying. These assumptions have also been the assumptions behind practically the entire Western thinking on India. They came to be the assumptions behind much of the modem Indian thinking on India in so far as it remained within the framework created by Western perceptions. The unfortunate fact is that not only are they manifestly wrong, but that they have also irremediably diverted attention from the main issues that arose in Indian life which, if we were to have an adequate understanding of what the ancient Indian thinkers were talking about, would be seen to be the main issues in human life as a whole.

Let me first provide a brief summary of Weber's views, mostly in his own words (as translated), those views being central to his entire perception of India. One problem here is that, not knowing German, I have naturally relied on the English translation by Gerth and Martindale of Max Weber's *Hinduismus und Buddhismus.* In my talk on a history of German misunderstandings of India I had referred to Professor Detlef Kantowsky's criticism (Kantowsky: 1982) of that translation as inaccurate in many places and, therefore, generally unreliable. Fortunately, with only one exception, the passages that I am concerned with are not mentioned by him as suffering from any misrepresentation of Weber's views due to a mistranslation of them. If in fact they do, my criticism of Weber will then require correcting, because I would, in that case, have based my criticism not on what

Weber had actually said but on a distortion of his views. Until then 1 shall presume that the summary which follows faithfully reflects his conclusions regarding Indian civilization.

In the first place, Weber identifies Indian religion as Hinduism (Weber 1958:4). One belongs to Hinduism merely by being born to Hindu parents: Hinduism is 'exclusive' in the sense that in no other way can the individual enter its community, at least the circle of those considered fully qualified religiously (Weber 1958:6). Hinduism does not wish to encompass mankind.

No matter what his beliefs or way of life, anyone not born a Hindu remains an outsider, a barbarian to whom the sacred values of Hinduism are in principle denied (Weber 1958:6). Hinduism is exclusive in another sense as well, in the sense that a sect is exclusive (Weber 1958:8). For certain religious offences a person is forever excluded from the community (Weber 1958:8). Hinduism was an almost irresistible social force. For centuries two salvation religions expressly hostile to the Brahmans, Jainism and, to a greater extent, Buddhism, have contended with Hinduism throughout the Indian culture area. In no way universally predominant, they were, however, officially established confessions (Weber 1958:18). Once established, by means of diffusion of the caste-system, the assimilative power of Hinduism is so great that it tends even to integrate social forms considered beyond its religious borders. Thus religious movements of expressly anti-Brahmanical and anti-caste character, i.e. contrary to one of the fundamentals of Hinduism, have been in all essentials returned to caste order (Weber 1958:18-19). Caste, that is, the ritual rights and duties it gives and imposes, and the position of the Brahmans, is the fundamental institution of Hinduism. Above all, without caste there is no Hindu. But the position of the Hindu with regard to the authority of the Brahman may vary extraordinarily,

from unconditional submission to the contesting of his authority (Weber 1958:29).

Indian religion having been identified by Weber as Hinduism, the two heterodox salvation confessions, Buddhism and Jainism, having been vanquished in their long contention with Hinduism, Weber then offers some very definite conclusions about its chief characteristics. They are as follows. AD salvation religions of Hinduism are addressed to one common question: how can man escape from the wheel of rebirth and thereby ever new death? How is salvation possible from eternally new death and therefore salvation from life (Weber 1958:133)? All salvation technologies of India, stemming from the intellectual strata, whether orthodox or heterodox, involve a withdrawal not only from everyday life but from the world in general, including paradise and the world of the gods as well. Since residence in paradise is but for a finite time one must tremble in fear of the moment when the surplus of merits is used up, for one must inevitably enter upon a new rebirth on earth (Weber 1958:166-7). The quest for salvation did not reject suffering or sin or the imperfection of the world, but rather it rejected transitory nature (Weber 1958:167). Transitoriness adheres to everything, whether available to sense perception or to man's imagination as earthly, heavenly, or hellish forms and things. It is a quality of the world of forms as a whole. The world is an eternal, meaningless 'wheel' of recurrent births and deaths steadily rolling on through all eternity (Weber 1958:167). The central concern of all Hindu philosophy was with the structure and relation of these beings to the world and the god-head. The one and only question of Hindu philosophy was: how could souls be untangled from the web of karma--causality tying them to the wheel of the world? An absolute presupposition of Hindu philosophy after the full development of the karma and samsara doctrines, was that escape from the wheel of rebirth could be the one and only conceivable

function of 'salvation' (Weber 1958:167). In the last analysis Indian thought was indifferent to the actualities of the world, and, through gnosis, sought the one thing needful beyond it-salvation from it 11 (Weber 1952:162). The extreme radicalism in this denial of the world was determined by the world image of Indian religious philosophy which in its consistency left no choice other than yearning. for salvation (1958:167).

The next element in Weber's view of Hindu religiosity is naturally formed by a cluster of statements as regards the means to salvation. These are as follows. All Asian philosophies and soteriologies ultimately had a common presupposition: that knowledge, be it literary knowledge or mystical gnosis, is the single absolute path to the highest holiness here and in the world beyond (Weber 1958:330). This is a knowledge not of the things of this world or of the everyday events of nature and social life and the laws that they hold for both. Rather, it is philosophical knowledge of the 'significance' of the world and life. Such a knowledge can evidently never be established by means of empirical occidental science, and in terms of its particular purpose should by no means be confused with it. It lies beyond science (Weber 1958:330-1). This 'knowledge' is not a rational implement of empirical science such as made possible the rational domination of nature and man as in the Occident. Rather, it is the means of mystical and magical domination over the self and the world: gnosis. It is attained by an intensive training of body and spirit, either through asceticism or, and as a rule, through strict, methodologically ruled meditation (1958:33 1). Moreover, the fact that this 'knowledge' remained mystical in character, had two important consequences. The first was the formation of a redemption aristocracy, since the capacity for mystical gnosis is a charisma not accessible to all (Weber 1958:331). Second, it acquired an asocial and apolitical character. Mystical knowledge is not, at least not adequately and rationally,

communicable. Thus Asiatic soteriology always leads those seeking the highest holy objectives to an other-worldly realm of the rationally unformed (Weber 1958:331). The highest form of Asiatic mystical belief was an 'emptying', which is an emptying of experience of materials of the world (Weber 1958:332). The devaluation of the world and its drives is an unavoidable psychological consequence of this. It is the meaning-content of mystical holy possession which rationally cannot be further explained (Weber 1958:332).

In a civilization devoted primarily to salvation, natural sciences could not have developed, because the empirical world was devalued. But there was, according to Weber, another factor that was involved. In Hellenic antiquity, despite the atomism of Democritus and the extensive mathematical foundations, the development of natural sciences was hindered because of the triumph of an exclusive interest in social criticism and social ethics after Socrates (Weber 1958:147). In India, the rise of natural sciences was hindered precisely for the opposite reason-a complete lack of social criticism (Weber 1958:144). In India the socially anchored unshakability of certain metaphysical presuppositions pushed all philosophy in the direction of individual salvation-striving: that served as a barrier not only to the development of special sciences but also to a thinking out of the problem of thought in general (Weber 1958:147). The Apollonian quest for absolute conceptual clarity did not develop the theory of knowledge beyond the noteworthy beginnings of logic of the Nyaya school. This was partly due to the deflection of rational endeavour towards pseudo-systematization which, in turn, was determined by the technique of the ancient literary tradition. The sense for the empirical, plain, and sober fact was stifled through an essentially rhetorical search for 'significance' in phantasy beyond the realm of facts. Yet Indian scientific literature made excellent contributions in

the fields of algebra, grammar, anatomy, medicine and music (Weber 1958:161).

Weber's views as regards the Hindu indifference to rational ethics, to history, to politics, and to aesthetics followed logically from his presuppositions. They may be summarized next. Because they were in search of mystic salvation of the soul and escape from the senseless mechanism of existence, the Hindu and Buddhist educated classes, whether orthodox or heterodox, found the true sphere of their interests quite outside the things of the world, and as a consequence avoided the fineness of aesthetic gesture (Weber 1958:338). What is more, the idea that through simple behaviour addressed to the 'demands of the day' one may achieve salvation, which lies at the basis of the specifically occidental significance of 'personality', is alien to Asia. This is as excluded from Asiatic thought as the pure factual rationalism of the West, which practically tries to discover the impersonal laws of the world (Weber 1958:342, translation mistaken?). In Indian civilization there was no 'natural' order of men and things in contrast to positive social order. There was no sort of 'natural law'. But there was, in theory at least, only holy, status-compartmentalized positive law in areas which remained unregulated as indifferent. There were positive statutes of princes, castes, guilds, sibs, and agreements of individuals. All the problems which the concept of 'natural law' called into being in the Occident were completely lacking in India. There simply was no 'natural' quality of man before any authority, least of all before a superworldly god (Weber 1958: 144). This excluded forever the rise of social criticism, of rationalistic speculation, and abstractions of natural law type, and hindered the development of any sort of idea of 'human rights'. The concepts of 'state' and 'citizen', even that of 'subject', did not appear. Only status *dharma* was recognized-the rights and duties of kings and other castes to themselves and others (Weber 1958:144-5). The problem of a

'political ethic' has never preoccupied Indian theory; in the absence of ethical universalism and natural right, it could hardly be otherwise. The *dharma* of the prince was to conduct war for the sake of pure power per se (Weber 1958:146). All political theory was a completely oral technology of how to get and hold power. It went far beyond what was familiar and average practice for the signores of the early Italian Renaissance in these respects and was completely devoid of all 'ideology' in the Western sense of that word (Weber 195 8:146).

The 'organic' social doctrine of Hinduism could elaborate the *dharma of* each profession solely out of the peculiarities of its techniques. And that being the case, it only produced terminologies for special callings and spheres of life-from construction technique to logic to the technology of making love. The social theory of Hinduism furnished no principles for an ethical universalism, as distinct from techniques which would raise general demands for life in the world (1958:147).

The inner-wordly ethic of the Bhagvadgita is 'organismic' in a sense hardly to be surpassed. Indian 'tolerance' rests upon an absolute relativizing of all ethical commandments. They are relativized not only according to caste membership, but also according to the goal sought by the individual. It is no more a matter of negative tolerance but: (i) of relative and graded appreciation for quite contrary maxims of action; (ii) of the recognition of the lawful and ethical autonomy of the various spheres of life which had to result from their equal devaluation as soon as ultimate questions of salvation were at stake (Weber 1958:189-90). That this universal organic relativism was-no mere theory, but had penetrated deeply into emotional life, can be seen from the documents which Hinduism has preserved from the time of its rule (Weber 1958:190).

In India the idea of the 'accident of birth', so critical of society, is almost completely absent. The idea of 'accident of birth' is common

to Confucians and occidental social reformers. The Indian, on the other hand, views the individual as born into the caste merited by conduct in a prior life (Weber 1958:121). The *karma* doctrine transformed the world into a strictly rational, ethically-determined cosmos; it represents the most consistent theodicy ever produced by history (Weber 1958:121). Order and rank of the castes are eternal (according to doctrine) like the course of the stars. To overthrow them would be senseless (Weber 1958:122). So long as the *karma* doctrine was unshaken, revolutionary ideas or progressivism were inconceivable. The lowest castes, furthermore, had the most to win through ritual correctness and were least tempted to innovations (Weber 1958:123). It was impossible to shatter traditionalism, based on caste ritualism anchored in *karma* doctrine, by rationalizing the economy. In this eternal caste world, the very gods, in truth, constituted a mere caste (Weber 1958:123). Anyone who wished to emancipate himself from this world and the inescapable cycle of births and deaths, had to leave it altogether to set out for that unreal realm to which Hindu 'salvation' leads (Weber 1958:123).

The foregoing propositions contain the substance of Max Weber's perception of Indian civilization. Not all of them are untenable, but because they all are connected with his fundamental presuppositions, which are undoubtedly mistaken, at least some of them which are true are also greatly misleading. It is true, for instance, that there has been in Indian thought a relativizing of ethical commandments and that this was no mere theory but had penetrated deeply into the structure of Indian personality. But relativism in Indian thought was a product of so many diverse factors that unless it is explained in its complete context, any isolated reference to it remains misleading. And that is firstly because, to any mind nurtured in a system of monistic and absolutistic beliefs concerning man and the world, relativism of any sort, and ethical relativism most of all, would naturally be viewed with distrust and distaste.

Besides, one may quite easily attribute, as Weber in fact did, Indian relativism to an altogether incorrect source and consequently reinforce what is already an incorrect understanding.

Here I am concerned only with Max Weber's basic presuppositions with which he worked on India, although it must be added that they were not his presuppositions alone. Before proceeding I must, however, bring up what, in my opinion, is a salutary warning to be constantly kept in mind by all those who work on Indian subjects. It is this. All manner of things could be said about Indian civilization; but nothing that could be said about it would itself be the whole truth. All descriptions of Indian civilization must be qualified, often by their opposite. This fact puts the most severe pressure on language, under which it distorts and breaks. A sentence which asserts something as well denying it, is literally meaningless; and a sentence which qualifies an assertion no sooner than it is made, is tiresome; yet, in order to describe Indian civilization as a whole, precisely such sentences will have to be used. This is necessitated, as it always has been in the history of Indian thought, by the irrefutable evidence that human reality is so complex and varied that every definite statement about it must leave out its contradictory side, which if it serves the cause of clarity, does so at the expense of truth. Any correction of Weber's understanding of India, as indeed of the Western understanding in general, will itself remain misleading until that correction is brought about through a far more connected view of Indian civilization than made available to us so far. That applies to this essay as well. I have completed a major part of the kind of work which I believe is a prerequisite for rethinking Indian civilisation, and 1 hope that some day it will see the light of day. What I am attempting here will have to be hurried and incomplete and should be taken as nothing more than quite simply a brief invitation to rethink India.

The very first presupposition with which Weber starts his work on India is that there is something called Hinduism and that it is the national form of Indian religion. But there never was any such thing as Hinduism, much less a national form of it. Conditioned by the concept of 'religion', and in search of a unified system of the religious beliefs of the Hindus, the Catholic missionaries of the sixteenth century manufactured the word 'Hinduism'. From the moment it was used it created a wrong understanding of Indian culture. For not only was it a misnomer, the concept of 'religion', when grafted onto 'Hinduism', put one on a false track. Hence every account of what is called Hinduism has suffered from the fallacy of mistaken identity. If people found it difficult to define 'Hinduism', and still more difficult to keep any one definition of it from being rendered false even by a simple fact, it is because, made desperate by conflicting beliefs, a common name was sought under which the most elusive, easily confusing, and complex diversity of faiths and living, could be brought together. There has thus been the double error of identity, first in gathering the diverse faiths, beliefs and practices into a fictitious 'Hinduism', then in taking that to be a 'religion'. This error still persists. The first step towards understanding Indian society is to see that its most fundamental concept has been *dharma;* and *dharma is* not 'religion'. The very first question ought to have been, as it always had been in Indian thought: what is *dharma?* Instead, the question became: what is Hinduism?

Even the word 'Hindu' is not to be found in any of the ancient texts. That word was coined, perhaps for the first time, by the invading Arabs in *circa* eighth century A.D. The undeniable fact is that ancient thinkers of India were not addressing themselves to 'Hindus'; they were concerned with man as such. It is a fact of profoundest significance that ancient Indians did not give to themselves any specific identity as a people. The only identity they

gave to themselves was in terms of dharma-which they conceived to be the identity of man anywhere. The notion that Indian civilization is 'Hindu' civilization, has been the source of all misunderstandings about it in the West as well as in modem India. Indian civilization is Dharmic civilization and not 'Hindu' civilization. The undeniable fact that for several centuries a vast majority of the people of India have identified themselves as 'Hindu' does not in any way lessen the irony that that identity was given to them by invading foreigners, and formed no part whatever of their own tradition.

The second presupposition of Max Weber was that Indian culture was religious in all its fundamental aspects. From this he proceeded to trace the social consequences of Hindu and Buddhist religiosity. There has been no greater source of a wrong understanding of Indian culture than that. For Dharmic civilization was not founded on any 'religion'; in all its movements, excepting of course the theistic part of its history, it was profoundly secular. It was secular in the sense that its views of man and the world were derived not from anything outside the world but from the inherent nature of man. The Indian explanations of man were located in man himself. The concept of *dharma* enshrined the totality of the Indian understanding of man: and *dharma* was indisputably a secular conception, not a religious one. However, to say that Max Weber not only did not see the crucial importance of *dharma for* understanding Indian society but also that his understanding of *dharma itself* as techniques of holy living was all wrong, is not to reproach him, for the concept of *dharma had* been so inadequately grasped and universally misunderstood that that was bound to happen with Weber as well.

It is impossible for me here to do anything more than merely indicate the essential secularity of the concept of *dharma,* and hence also its universality. The root meaning of the word *dharma* was 'that which upholds' or 'that which sustains'. In presupposing that *dharma*

sustains the world, ancient Indians had presupposed that there is a natural order inherent in the very structure of life without which life cannot exist. Dharma was thus not, as Weber has assumed, a positive organic social order in which everything that lives is sustained. That dharma was secular order, and not an order derived from any revelation or commandment of God, or from any theological doctrine, can be easily seen by the numerous references to what its embodiments are and the ways of reaching it. The *Mahabharata* speaks of ten embodiments of *dharma: yasas,* or fame, *satya,* truth, *dama,* self-control, *sauca,* cleanliness, *arjava,* simplicity, *hri,*endurance,*acapalam,* resoluteness of character, *dana,* giving and sharing, *tapas,*austerities, and *brahmacarya,* continence. And there are five ways of reaching *dharma: ahimsa,* non-violence, *samata,* attitude of equality, *santih,* peace or tranquility, *anrsansyam,* lack of aggression and cruelty, and *amatsara,* absence of envy. *Dharma* was often personified and is spoken of as having thirteen wives: *Sraddha,* faith; *Lakshmi,*wealth; *Dhrti,* resoluteness; *Tustih,* satisfaction; *Medha,* intellect;*Pustih,* strength; *Kriya,* action; *Buddhi,* intelligence; *Lajja,* modesty; *Vapus,* wondrous beauty; *Santih,* peace; *Siddhi,* success; and *Kirti,*fame. Born of them, there are fifteen sons: from *Sraddha, Kama,* desire; from *Lakshmi, Darpa,* arrogance; from *Dhrti, Niyama,* rule;from *Tustih, Saniosa,* contentment; from *Pustih, Lobha,* desire for more; from *Medha, Sruta,* leaming; from *Kriya, Danda,* just punishment, *Naya,* worldly wisdom, and *Vinaya,* discipline or modest conduct; from *Buddhi, Bodh,* awareness; from *Lajja, Vinaya,* good breeding; from *Vapus, Vyavasaya,* commerce; from *Santih ,Kshema,* comfort; from *Siddhi, Sukha,* happiness; and from *Kirti, Yasas,* fame. These were evidently a personification of all the results that must naturally flow from *dharma* as social and personal order. *Adharma* as disorder is also personified: *Himsa,* violence, is his wife and *Anna,* untruth, their son and *Nikrit,* dishonesty, their daughter:

from them arose, *Bhaya,* fear; *Naraka,* hell; *Maya,* illusion; *Vedana,* pain, and Mrityu, death. So that wherever *adharma* is, these concequences also are. The social aspect of *dharma* was enshrined in tk system of*varna-asrama,* which later degenerated into the castesystem. That social order was, however, not the 'Hindu' social order but universal in its foundations in so far as division of labour or special callings and their corresponding professional ethic, which carried also the corresponding self-denials, must remain the basis of civilized society anywhere.

That Indian civilization was not, in its fundamental character, religious and theological, can be seen from another fact of which one hears very little, or only in passing-the non-theistic or atheistic temper of the main systems of Indian philosophy. They are all nontheistic in that the concept of God was not considered necessary either to explain the creation of the world or the destiny of man. Nyaya was the only system that offered proofs for the existence of God: but 'God' in Nyaya occupies a position which has nothing to do with the rest of its philosophy, and was gratuitously brought into it for reasons that were not philosophical.

At the same time it must be stated that the Indian philosophical position was not 'atheistic' in the Western sense of that word. In order to be that, it would have to be concerned with the problem of God as an explanation of the world. Indian philosophy for the most part was really not concerned with that problem. This clarification is particularly necessary because Western atheism, in being a rejection of the creationist view of the world and man, was committed also is a view from which every trace of the spiritual and the transcendent was removed. Western atheism implied, moreover, the impossibility of an ethic that was anything more than an agreed social arrangement. But in the case of Dharmic atheism, with the exception of Lokayata, none of these consequences followed necessarily. It remained at once non-

creationist and transcendental. Hence it could maintain, quite consistently, that man's destiny is not of the material world alone.

The atheism of Dharmic philosophy was already entailed in the various theories of causation, the precise relation between 'cause' and 'effect', and the question whether there was even such a thing as 'cause' being the most substantial problem of Dharmic epistemology.. Unless that problem is studied in detail, one can hardly hope to understand the direction philosophy took in India. Indeed, to anybody aspiring to have even a most general idea of it, 1 would suggest the problem of causation as the starting point. Much of the rest, including the Indian theories of ethics, followed from the different positions taken in that regard. All Dhannic theories of causation had one consequence in common rejection of the idea of God as the efficient cause of all phenomena.

The theories of *karma* and *moksa,* which Max Weber perceived as the two most important religious doctrines of Hinduism, had no connection whatever with religion, or with the idea of God, or with theology. He described the theory of *karma* as 'the most consistent theodicy ever produced by history'. The evident fact is that it was no theodicy at all. The concepts of *karma* and *moksa* were arrived at entirely through analysis of the nature of acts and of their binding consequences in which God has no place. And because they were firmly rooted in that analysis, they have had, like all other dharmic concepts, plainly a universal meaning. They were not 'Hindu' concepts, nor a product of 'Hinduism', although that is how they have been presented in modem times. From a most thorough analysis of empirical reality ancient Indians abstracted two general propositions a *posteriori:* (a) pleasure and suffering are the results of one's own acts; (b) from the moment of conception, one suffers the fruits of acts done through the preceding body. These propositions formed the essence of *karma* theory. They were connected with another proposition, namely,

not all acts come to fruition immediately, and some acts do not fructify in one lifetime. These propositions, if not wholly empirical, were still secular, in the sense that they founded the edifice of *karma* theory not on the idea of God but on the structure of human desire and what followed from it necessarily. The rationality of *moksa* consisted in the argument that: since 'thrist' and entanglement lead to a virtually endless chain of acts, and in order to fructify the acts require a series of lives, to have release from that repetitive series one must overcome 'thrist' and dissolve entanglement. *Moksa* has been the ultimate point in the logic of *karma.* Together they constituted a rational system of thought in which all its essential propositions were deduced from the main premise that every act, if done with a motive, binds its doer. At the same time they were rooted in empirical experience. That is to say, the rationality of *karma* and *moksa* was not of an *a priori* kind. None of the propositions concerning them was a pure logical abstraction, which experience could neither confirm nor deny. Their basis remained always empirical, the sensible world of experience, where there are visible differences of personal capacity and circumstances.

But the logical simplicity of the concepts of *karma* and *moksa* did not mean that no sooner were the propositions concerning them stated than they would be understood in their full implications, or would be understood as something applicable to one's self existentially.Hence the Dharmic emphasis not merely on cerebral comprehension, but on genuine awareness, which could be achieved only through a long training of the body and the mind, with several levels of increasing sophistication. That training, like the logic of *karma* and *moksa,* was secular, without the least trace of anything religious or theological in it. It was, in actual fact, an indistinguishable part of that logic, and therefore of universal application. It begins with the propositions: stronger than the sense-organs are their objects, stronger than the sense-objects is the will, stronger than the

will is the discriminating mind, and stronger than that is the soul. Since desire is the starting point of all acts, and the sense-organs naturally rush towards objects that are agreeable, and withdraw from the ones that are disagreeable, the variety of human acts and experience arising from the ground that lies between inclination and aversion, the sense-organs must be kept under full control.

But despite the logical clarity of *moksa* theory it became obscured by the religiosity of theistic practices. And even though it had in its essentials nothing to do with asceticism, the two became hopelessly intertwined. Thus, *moksa* has invariably been perceived as a religious idea. What is more, it was taken up by every school of philosophy, excepting materialism. And, with the exception of Buddhism, with its view that nowhere is a permanent self to be found, there was much speculation as regards the state of *atman* after one had achieved *moksa* and had thereby stopped the wheel of *karma.* Different schools conceived that state in different ways and called it by different names. That part of Dharmic philosophy was by its very nature also the most speculative and, for that reason, the most open to dispute. This naturally created the impression that *moksa* was the chief concern of philosophy; and because the idea of *moksa,* in ascetic traditions and in theism, appeared to be a religious idea, Indian philosophy appeared to be religious. The different misunderstandings of the real import of the concept of *moksa* reinforced each other. But, with all that, it remained a distinctive element in Dharmic consciousness. Equally distinctive, however, were the anarchic implications of *moksa* misunderstood. It was the task, therefore, of the *dharmasastra* to neutralize the disruptive effects of *moksa,* misunderstood and misapplied. The manner in which that was achieved was the same in which all other conflicts and threats to social order were neutralized, step by step.

Finally, there was the presupposition underlying Max Weber's work on India that Indian culture has been primarily other-worldly because it had radically devalued the empirical world. Nothing is farther from truth than this, although there were numerous factors, many of them visible, which could have produced precisely that impression. It is true that with the ascent of theism, and its eventual hold upon the Dharmic mind, God was to be the ultimate point of human reference, and forever the chief judge of the motives and the needs of men. In the centuries to follow, the authority of scriptures was to replace the logic of experience. Dharmic culture now appeared to be a religious culture and other-worldly. This led to the profoundest misunderstanding of all, for at no point of time was the basic secularity of Dharmic understanding of man abandoned, and Dharmic life continued to be governed, as before, by non-theistic assumptions and not by religious considerations. This resulted, in the West, in two opposite misunderstandings: that Indian thought is radically agnostic, relativistic, and man-centred, disregarding God; and that it is radically religious, otherwordly, mystic, disregarding the actualities of this world.

The deepest foundations of Dharmic culture were secular in the sense that the human situation,also the transcending of it, were understood in human terms, without positing God as their cause. But this did not make the Dharmic world-view merely anthropocentric: for in the sweep of *dharma* were included animals as well as gods. To Dharmic culture there was no absolute discontinuity between man and animal any more than there was between man and god. Men were also animal-like, and gods were man-like, except that they were immortal Thus, the secularity of Dharmic thought was not anthropocentric any more than the ideal of transcendence was theocentric. And that is so entirely because, unlike Western culture, Dharmic thought did not admit any polarity between mind and matter, this-worldly and other

worldly, secular and religious, the flesh and the spirit, and such like. The main system of Dharmic thought was evidently not God-centered; but this not as a reaction, or in opposition, to any philosophy that was theocentric, but on its own. All Dharmic explanations of man are demonstrably centred in man but because they arose in a culture that simply did not think in terms of contesting polarities, the fact that Dharmic thought was man-centred did not put it in opposition to nature or to the world of animals. As a consequence, its anthropocentricity, and derived from it its essential secularity, were radically different in nature from Western secularity. In the systems of philosophy and in the *dharmasastra,* while God was not the measure of man and the world, man, in being the measure of man, was not separated from plants, animals and gods. The secularity of *dharma* secured also its universality, because order is the universal condition of life.

20

TWO METHODS OF UNDERSTANDING: WESTERN AND DHARMIC

This essay, now slightly expanded, formed the foundational paper for a conference of four German and twice as many Indian philosophers, on 'Basic Concepts of Eastern & Western Thinking: The Concept of Rationality', held at the Goethe Institute, Madras, 5-8 March 1991.

Understanding of the foundations of the Western and Indian civilisations by each other is not wanting altogether. But it is to acquire a still sharper focus, a deeper content, and a greater awareness that men and women who live their lives in separate contexts of their own civilisations need each other in a far more fundamental sense than they have hitherto believed. What that fundamental sense is, is to emerge from deeper understanding, or perhaps there are already clear intimations of it. And that is why, in some areas at least, like philosophy, religion, medicine, art, music and dance, the force that impels a large number of Western men and women, and not merely the academic philosophers, to make a journey to India to understand the principles of the civilisation that grew here is something more than just intellectual curiosity about what is alien but challenging and fascinating.

That strengthens the belief, wrongly of course, that the Indian mind has some very special gift for philosophy and religion which is denied to the West, where the mind is cast more in a materialistic mould.

The fact that an increasing number of Western philosophers and scientists are deeply engaged in examining critically the limits of their

respective methods of understanding man and the world, and not just the negative results of the stupendous triumphs of science and technology, further adds to the prevalent notion of the spiritual India and the rationalistic and materialistic West. That notion, which was not entirely an Indian prejudice unshared by Europe, ignores the fact that there have always been, as there are today, deep reserves of spirituality in the Western soul and the grossest forms of unabashed materialism in India.

Swami Vivekananda was the first to acknowledge this. Far from displaying any spiritual superiority on behalf of the Hindus, Vivekananda, in his public speeches and writings, expressed his steadfast conviction that India needs the West as much as the West needs India. And this was not to be an exchange between Indian spirituality and Western material advancement. He rejected the foolish, but immensely popular, notion of Indian culture being primarily spiritual and the Western culture being primarily materialistic.

But Vivekananda, too, had fallen into the error of making a sharp distinction between society and religion when no such distinction was ever made in Indian civilisation. Vivekananda's view that religion in India remained wonderful but society became rigid and corrupt, whereas its very opposite is what had happened in the West, only served to perpetuate the wholly erroneous dichotomy the missionaries had posited between Hindu religious faiths and Hindu society. Common to the missionary criticism and the Hindu defence was a framework of perception of the disorders of the Indian social system that has been singularly misleading. The same is true of the liberal, utilitarian, Marxist and modem scientific thought and, when it began to be articulated, the Indian response to them.

In reality that part of our common history carried within itself a fundamental conflict between the conception of rationality as

propagated vigorously by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, the roots of which lie in Aristotelian logic, and the conception of it that runs like a connecting thread in the whole of Indian thought, and no less in Indian life. Those were wholly divergent views of rationality and, if we take into account the intellectual climate in which they arose, irreconcilable. One was derived chiefly from the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle, the characteristic Western logical framework of *either/or.* The Indian thinkers viewed that as too narrow a framework to account for the complexity of reality in which the opposites were combined as the inherent nature of everything.

The conflict always was between two different rationalities as two different *methods* of perceiving human reality.When the rationality of the Enlightenment, if we can speak of it for a moment in the singular, became an ism, the ideology of rationalism, it turned into a conflict between two different ways of life, two different ways of ordering human relationships. Every difference in the understanding of human existence, of life itself that separates Indian civilisation from the Western arises, in the first place, from two very different methods of inquiry into the human condition.

That being the case, the procedure, hitherto followed, of narrating the respective doctrines and ideas concerning man and the world, and then judging them as to their truth or falsehood, but always from a presupposed view of truth, coupled with a belief in its finality, can only produce wrong understanding and conflicts. Or it will produce crude or refined caricatures of each other. Or it will produce eventually a state of mind in which the other is dismissed as inscrutable, unknowable almost in principle. From this arises the Western reproach, its irritation barely concealed, that the Indians have somehow got into the habit of believing that nobody does, or can, understand them. At the same time, it is a fact beyond questioning, as can be seen from their published works in the last hundred and fifty

years, that modem Indian thinkers have hardly ever had any profound understanding of the Western civilisation beyond what was available to them from the Western sources themselves.

But understanding is not something static. It is a process. The passage to understanding is through wrong understanding and misunderstanding, for the passage to truth is through error, and errors have their histories. But what is truth? What is error? What is understanding? All the different answers to these questions in the histories of different civilisations had invariably presupposed a particular method and its efficacy in answering them. That supposed efficacy was later proved to be either illusory or severely limited. Those different suppositions about the way to determine truth, either in revealed religious traditions, or in philosophy, or in modern science, whether they had offered or not a sure ground of understanding, had in actual fact brought to human living immense organised violence. Rationalism has been no less militant than religious traditions.

The question, then, is no longer one of studying the histories of different methods of assessing what is truth and what is error, and of making a choice as to which among them is the most true, for that already presupposes a criterion of making the choice, and any such criterion will in turn still require a justification. The problem of rationality is no longer an exercise m the theory of knowledge alone, but one of facing the overwhelming fact that all methods of inquiry into the human condition had brought in their wake individual and social disorder.

Is that a permanent part of the human condition itself? Or is there a way out of it? It is to this challenge posed by the seemingly infinite capacity of the human mind testing the limits of human understanding by pushing it ever farther, but in that very process creating also profound disorder, that we have to address ourselves.

That course is dictated, I think, as much by a practical necessity as by a theoretical one, should one insist on distinguishing the two. The theoretical necessity arises from the crisis which has enveloped the whole of Western thought and not philosophy alone. It consists in the collapse of all certainties, when certainties had been a characteristic feature of the Western mind. It is a collapse, in actual reality, of the Aristotelian method of either/or, which had in the first place set up what was supposed to be a secure foundation for certitude. For a proposition was either true or false; and once something was proved in that logic to be true, it then also provided an incontestable ground for making ethical choices. The crisis is brought about by the collapse also of that characteristic Western method, finding its fullest expression in Cartesian philosophy and in modem science, in terms of which human life was divided into contesting polarities, or antinomies, through which the Western understanding of man and the world proceeded on what seemed for many centuries a triumphant course. The Western understanding was through division-and through conflict which division entailed. Subject or object, man or nature, true or false, good or evil, reason or faith, body or mind, matter or spirit, individual or the society, man or God, history or the eternal human cycle.

The history of European thought is a history of the mutually conflicting ideologies, with their respective political systems, individualism or socialism for instance, which that method produced. The excesses and the disorder of one of the contesting polarities was sought to be corrected by moving to the other; but when the other soon produced its own excesses and disorder, there was a crisis of understanding, for nothing was then left to correct the other disorder.

The failure of the whole enterprise that was taken up by the Enlightenment, that of replacing tradition with reason, faith with science, raises the question: has not the Western mind now exhausted

its resources of understanding? For, between the Enlightenment criticism of faith and tradition, and the current vigorous criticism of the Enlightenment understanding, chiefly by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Thomas S. Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, Michael Polanyi, and Alasdair MacIntyre, there still exists a common framework of *either/or. Now* the debate is: science or history. Much of what is being criticised iq presupposed in the criticism. It is evidently as one-sided as the philosophy of the Enlightenment was, and open to question nearly as much. What it suggests in actual reality is that the Western understandings of man and the world have reached a theoretical dead end.

Does the traditional Indian method of understanding, again if for the moment we may talk of it in the singular, have anything of substance to offer to the West in this situation? I think it has; and one is led to it, moreover, by the Western philosophical crisis itself.

The Indian method of understanding begins with the demonstrable fact that human reality carries within itself as its essential attribute a combination of opposites, and all opposites imply each other. The Aristotelian law of noncontradition may achieve clarity, but that clarity is achieved at the expense of truth. Truth is neither susceptible to the logic of *either/or,* nor is it unilinear. Truth already implies untruth, and expresses itself at different levels of human consciousness, finding different expressions at different stages of life. Just as the question of truth cannot therefore be determined by setting up some arbitrary definition of truth, in which case there is no more to truth than what that definition allows; so, also, no method of inquiry that is surrounded with presuppositions, held true a *priori,* will bring understanding, for in that case one does not explore but merely works out those presuppositions, and happily concludes with what one had decided in advance to be the nature of truth.

In the Indian method of understanding man and the world there are really no presuppositions. Not even the ideas of *atman,* or self, and karma, which are generally taken to be the most fundamental presuppositions of Indian philosophical systems excepting the ,materialists and the Buddhists, who denied that there existed any such substance or entity as *atman,* or a permanent self, a centre of consciousness, which survived death. But the Buddha's perception of man's being, formulated in his central idea of *anatta,* or not-self, was very different from the materialists' denial of *atman.* It is true that in the subsequent development of the various philosophical schools, these two, *atman* and *karma,* were taken as 'given', but only in a historical sense.

They were reached, to begin with, as a result of systematic analysis of the structure of human personality, and were not merely assumed uncritically. And even when they were taken as 'given', they were developed often on radically different lines, for example in theistic philosophies that arose from the tenth century onwards.

The main point is that even such fundamental concepts as *atman* and karma were products of a certain method of inquiry and were not presupposed in that method itself.

There is in the Indian method of understanding nothing that is a priori. It begins with observable facts concerning human life; examines them in their interrelatedness; derives from them such inferences that can legitimately be drawn, and if from the same set of facts diverse and conflicting inferences can reasonably be drawn., that position is taken into account; then it moves from a lower level of generalisation to a progressively higher one; examines the question they give rise to; and keeping the evident contrariness and diversity of human facts, it seeks to discover the true nature of order, *dharma,* and disorder, *adharma,* in which, because of their simultaneous presence in man's being, his life is sustained and also plunged into darkness.

Free from presuppositions, this method is empirical, but does not lead to empiricism as the ultimate standard of reason: it is rational, but does not lead to rationalism as the sole standard of truth. As a method of reflecting upon human existence in all its diversity, it cuts across the familiar Western dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism altogether.

The Indian method of inquiry takes fully into account the role which human senses and intellect play in perception and understanding, but demonstrates their limits. But it does not see them as perpetual adversaries. There was in Indian thought no battle between them, which forms such a large part of the history of Western philosophy. It is only that the Indian method of inquiry does not accept their respective claims to be the *only* method of determining what truth is.

It showed the limits of the materialist claim that sense-perception is the only way to certitude and not even logical inference is infallible. It showed the limits also of reason, logic and argumentation as reliable guides to the knowledge of reality. They are the ways of definitions, distinctions, and definite statements. Taking them together as the sole standard of evaluation, they fragment in the process what is a complex unity of opposites, leading eventually to wrong perceptions, wrong because they are incomplete.

You have, therefore, as in the *Chandogya Upanisad,* the method of showing, in their interrelatedness, the elements of nature, the animal world, and the human personality with its bodily senses and its varied mental faculties, to be parts of cosmic reality-each of them, every part of man's being, to be brought fully into human awareness, respected, and worshipped as an expression of that larger unified reality. At the same time you have, as in the *Katha Upanisad,* and in some other *Upanisads,* the warning that not intellect, not argumentation, not reason, can, by itself, show one the truth about

that indivisible cosmic reality. The method is not to repudiate either physical senses or reason as *any* guide to truth but to show their inadequacy. The method is both empirical and rational, which means that it is neither *wholly* empiricistic nor *wholly* rationalistic, and neither does it posit any absolute disjunction between the two.

Nor does that method accept any polarity, much less any irreconcilable polarity, between subject and object, mind and body, reason and faith, truth and untruth, material and spiritual, man and nature, and other polarities that arise from them. To insist on their being absolutely separate and opposed to each other, and then base on that assumed dichotomy a whole world view, is to distort reality. For reality admits no such dichotomy.

Besides, as we know from everyday experience, things are not what they seem to be. But this is so, not because things present themselves only in fragments, but because sense-experience and the faculties of mind do not yield to us the knowledge of the unified nature of things, including ourselves. Even to ourselves we are not what we appear to be. It is sense-experience and the mind that present reality in fragments. The method of understanding involves, therefore, the recognition that all definite statements, far from describing things as they are, falsify them; for, in saying something definite about a thing, they leave out so much else that pertains indivisibly to that thing. Hence the necessity of adding to each definite description of a thing *'neti, ned',* or 'it is not this alone, it is not this alone', as suggested in the *Upanisads.*

This method is followed even more uncompromisingly in Jainism, which maintains that no statement about things is wholly true. Every judgement is from a particular point of view, *naya,* and there are several points of view from which different things can be said about a thing, each one of them to be qualified with a *syad,* or 'perhaps', no sooner than it is made into a definite statement. This is the Jaina theory

of *syadavada,* or the theory of 'qualified assertion'. In a modified form, but keeping its relativistic core, this is the epistemological position also in Buddhism. In every other system of Indian philosophy, the inquiry into the nature of things proceeds with the recognition of the incompleteness of human knowledge. Knowledge by its very nature is incomplete and indefinite-perhaps. Hence the Indian view, derived from a most detailed inquiry into the nature of reality, that reality is *anirvacaniya,* that about which nothing definite or final can be said. The *Isavasya-Upanisad* takes the view that 'The face of truth is hidden by a blindingly radiant golden disc'.

But all the foregoing statements, although pointing to the infinite openness of knowledge and understanding, are themselves definite enough to be contradicting themselves. From this genuine difficulty, taken seriously in Indian thought, arose the inquiry into the nature of language as an instrument of knowledge. Language was soon found to be an inadequate, if not entirely worthless, instrument of understanding. In contrast to the Western search for clarity, with the accompanying belief that some day language will achieve perfection to the degree that will enable man to see reality with absolute clarity, the Indian method shows that any understanding that is purely lingual, must lead one not to clarity, but to ambiguity.

The Indian quest was more for completeness than for perfection. Thus, understanding was more complete or less in the same measure that it made one aware of the essential related- ness of things. This raises a whole variety of questions, many of them raised in the Indian systems of thought themselves. Without going into them here, the underlying problem seems to be that if language is the only means of connecting things, it also tends to refashion facts, and facts would not always submit to language. Until a thing is said, a thing is nothing definite, nor its relation to other things evident: but a thing is changed in the manner of saying it. It is this problem which led the Indian

thinkers to the inadequacy of language and reason in providing us with the knowledge of the true nature of things. This was not to repudiate them, but to suggest the existence in man of another faculty that brought to light the interrelatedness not only of all forms of life but of matter and consciousness as well.

This faculty was called by different names in different systems: *prajna,* or *pratibha,* or *bodh,* or *drsti.* But, however differently understood, it was never perceived in *opposition* to language or reason, nor in opposition to sense-experience. *Prajna* was not a negation of any of these. Neither was it just 'faith', or what Michael Polanyi calls 'personal commitment' to knowing truth,[1] 'a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known', 'a condition that is 'no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge'.[2] Carrying them all within itself, each a necessary but not sufficient condition of perceiving truth, *prajna* moves beyond them on the padi of understanding.

Then, in a reverse movement, but reverse only in a manner of saying, every piece of understanding, insight, knowledge, thus gained is made subject to the test of experience and reason. The test, however, is not of the crude certainties of the either, but that of experience and reason cleansed of their exaggerated claims. That was the ultimate appeal in the *Upanisads.* Differences with some central upanisadic teachings apart, that was the appeal of the Buddha; and later, when his Order broke up into numerous contending schools, of the Buddhist philosophies as a whole. That was the position of all other systems of Indian thought, excepting the materialists whose appeal was to the criterion of sense-experience mostly.

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1 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), pp.299-324.
2 Ibid., p. viii.

Since there is no separation of theory from practice in the Indian method, the disciplining of one's physical senses and mind is an integral part of the Indian inquiry into the nature of truth. The question as to the nature of that discipline does not, however, raise any theoretical problem of a kind that will necessarily involve the circularity of presupposition and proof. The practical reason of Indian discipline is not derived from presuppositions. It simply calls to attention the universally observable fact that the body and mind, in relation to each other, create their distinctive impediments to understanding things and events even in their ordinary appearances. They create far more substantial impediments to man's search for the truth of his being even as they are inseparable from that truth. That is to say, if the face of truth is hidden with a blinding golden disc, that disc is crafted by man himself.

It follows that the process of understanding must be in a practical sense dependent upon the process of removing the numerous layers of impediments, some gross and others subtle, which the body and the mind create. That means that truth is not only a *knowing* but also a *living*. One is inseparable from the other.

It is now acknowledged by an increasing number of Western thinkers that the dichotomy of theory and practice has had various harmful consequences for the individual and society which that dichotomy must necessarily produce. Can that problem be satisfactorily resolved from within the Western traditions themselves? This is a central question.

The interlinked histories of those traditions seem to suggest, though, that the answer to that question must be in the negative. That is because all of them were cast in the *either/or* mould of understanding in which were separated not just theory and practice but all aspects of life. Man and the universe were fragmented by *either/or*

into numerous sets of oppositions; and it is in the light of those oppositions that the human condition was seen.

One such set consisted of the opposition which Kant (1724-1804) had presupposed between is and *ought,* a disjunction that was taken over by the positivistic philosophies of later times and became the chief premise of much of modem sociology and legal philosophy. They put one sided emphasis on is; moral philosophies, on *ought,* equally one sided. This fragmentation, this separation of is from *ought,* was brought about not because of the human failing of not being to live up to one's professed beliefs, but because of the supposed theoretical necessity of making that separation if the nature of moral judgements were to be understood with clarity. The reaction against positivism in ethical philosophy, in sociology, in anthropology, in legal philosophy, as also in the theory of literature, itself remained, however, firmly in the mould of *either/or.*

The problem of practical reason, from Aristotle down to our own times, arising from the search for a universal and objective ground for making one moral choice rather than another, has continued to be seen in the *either/or* of objectivism *or* subjectivism, objectivism or relativism. Objectivism, the theory that there exist universal objective criteria of evaluation, independent of the subjective person, in which all rational moral judgements are ultimately grounded, is now practically abandoned. For more than half a century now the discussion has been on the subjectivism side of the *either/or,* the view that moral judgements express at best a subjective preference for one rather than another course of action or evaluation, and that in conveying that preference by means of a moral sentence one wishes to influence others in favour of one's own preference. There is to be found no objective ground whatever, in this view, which can rationally justify any moral position.

In this debate, which has seen great philosophical skill, the refinement of the emotivist theory consists mainly in making a distinction between subjectivism and relativism; and that achieved, in clarifying that even under the common flag of subjectivism there exist fine differences on the question: what do moral statements really *mean?* So the debate in the West has been not about the problem of the ethical but about the meaning of moral sentences. And even the debate about the meaning of moral sentences has come to a sterile end.

In the Indian method of understanding, the error lay not in the search for an objective and universal ground of the ethical, but in assuming arbitrarily that what is objective has nothing in it of the subjective person, and what is universal must be totally independent of particular histories.

Neither does the error lie in the view that prejudices concerning what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, do in fact enter most moral statements and are influenced by the values a particular society or tradition has already come to hold as inviolable. The error lies in concluding from this that that is all that there is to the ethical in man and that there can be nothing universal about it, any more than there can be anything to the individual beyond what his or her social environment and history make him or her to be. The central error lies in the presupposition that there exists an absolute opposition between the universal and the particular.

If the universal is defined as that which is beyond human particularities, then such a definition is empty; for nothing, absolutely nothing, that is human can in that case ever be universal. If the individual is defined in terms only of the conditioning of history, then the fact that human beings transcend their histories everywhere all the time and enter into genuine fellowship with other human beings with very different histories, becomes totally inexplicable.

Thus the question is not: *either* reason *or* history. The problem is one of understanding the varied ways in which the inseparable unity of the individual and the universal manifests itself, at the same time as it is fragmented by our mental constructs. That, I think, is the underlying problem of practical rationality.

David Bohm has made a profound contribution, as a physicist, to the problem of fragmentation and its theoretical sources in the very structure of Western thought. It is of utmost importance, I think, that a discussion on rationality, or rationalities, takes into account what he said in his *Wholeness and the Implicate Order,* published in 1980.[3]

Our fragmentary way of thinking, looking, and acting, evidently has implications in every aspect of human life. That is to say, by a rather interesting sort of irony, fragmentation seems to be the one thing in our way of life which is universal, which works through the whole without boundary or limit. This comes about because the roots of fragmentation are very deep and pervasive. As pointed out, we try to divide what is one and indivisible, and this implies that in the next step we will try to identify what is different.

So fragmentation is in essence a confusion around the question of difference and sameness (or one-ness), but the clear perception of these categories is necessary in every phase of life. *To be confused about what is different and what is not, is to be confused about everything.* Thus, it is not an accident that our fragmentary form of thought is leading to such a widespread range of crises, social political, economic, ecological, psychological, etc., in the individual and in society as a whole. Such a mode of thought implies unending development of chaotic and meaningless conflict, in which the energies of all tend to be lost by movements that are antagonistic or else at cross purposes.

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3 Ark paperbacks, London, 1983.

Evidently, it is important and indeed extremely urgent to clear up this deep and pervasive kind of confusion that penetrates the whole of our lives. What is the use of attempts at social, political, economic or other action if the mind is caught up in a confused movement in which it is generally differentiating what is not different and identifying what is not identical? Such action will be at best ineffective and at worst really destructive.[4]

Bohm traces the roots of the prevailing tendency 'to think and perceive in terms of a fragmentary self-world view' to that 'larger movement that has been developing over the ages and that pervades almost the whole of our society today'. 'One might in fact go so far as to say that in the present state of society, and in the present general mode of teaching science, which is a manifestation of this state of society, a kind of prejudice in favour of a fragmentary self-world view is fostered and transmitted (to some extent explicitly and consciously but mainly in an implicit and unconscious manner) [5]

He demonstrates how the prevailing trend in modem physics is 'much against any sort of view giving primacy to formative activity in undivided wholeness of flowing movement. Indeed, those aspects of relativity theory and quantum theory which do suggest the need for such a view tend to be de-emphasised and in fact hardly noticed by most physicists, because they are regarded largely as features of the mathematical calculus and not as indications of the real nature of things': 'most physicists still speak and think, with an utter conviction of truth, in terms of the traditional atomistic notion that the universe is constituted of elementary particles which are 'basic building blocks' out of which everything is made'.[6]

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4 Ibid,pp.16-7.
5 Ibid,p.15.
6 Ibid, pp. 14-5

Bohm shows how the same tendency prevails in other sciences. 'For example, modem molecular biologists generally believe that the whole of life and mind can ultimately be understood in more or less mechanical terms': 'A similar trend has already begun to dominate in psychology'. 'Thus we arrive at the very odd result', Bohm says, 'that in the study of life and mind, which are just the fields in which formative cause acting in undivided and unbroken flowing movement is most evident to experience and observation, there is now the strongest belief in the fragmentary atomistic approach to reality'.[7]

That approach has direct social and political consequences. For it tends to divide what is indivisible, and unite what is really not uniteable. 'This can be seen especially clearly in terms of groupings of people in society (political, economic, religious, etc.). The very act of forming such a group tends to create a sense of division and separation of the members from the rest of the world but, because the members are really connected with the whole, this cannot work'. 'True unity in the individual and between man and nature, as well as between man and man, can arise only in a form of action that does not attempt to fragment the whole of reality'.[8] Bohm concludes by saying that 'men who are guided by such a fragmentary self-world view cannot, in the long run, do other than try in their actions to break themselves and the world into pieces'.[9]

I should mention here two other works which bring us, each in a different way, to the very core of the debate about rationality and the search for a true comprehension of morality or practical reason: Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue, published in 1981,[10] and Richard

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7 Ibid, p. 15.
8 Ibid, p. 16.
9 Ibid, p. 15.
10 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (London, Duckworth, 1981; seconded. 1982).

J.Bernstein's *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* which was published in 1983.[11] Both are concerned with the philosophical and cultural outcome of the Enlightenment and with the disquieting questions that have arisen in that context.

The thesis MacIntyre sets out to advance in *After Virtue* is that the language of morality is now in a state of grave disorder, and that Western society has, very largely, if not entirely, lost its comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality.

But the awareness of this disorder is not available to academic philosophy or history or sociology, he says. That is because their language is the language of that disorder. This explains why 'this world and its fate has remained unrecognised by the academic curriculum. For the forms of the academic curriculum would turn out to be among the symptoms of the disaster whose occurrence the curriculum does not acknowledge'.[12] The disorder is to be traced to the philosophies of the Enlightenment and has now pervaded the entire Western culture and its various forms of thought and practice. Modernity, the offspring of the Enlightenment, is its embodiment, whose disorder consists in the way in which it 'partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norm and modes of behaviour. 'So work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal. So both childhood and old age have been wrenched away from the rest of human life and made over into distinct realms. And all these separations have been achieved so that it is the distinctiveness of each and not the unity of the life of the individual who passes through those parts in terms of which we are

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[11] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Realism* (London, Basil Blackwell, 1983).
[12] After Virtue, p.4.

taught to think and to feel'.[13] That makes it difficult to see each human He as a whole.

Two other tendencies, besides, make that practically impossible: one is domesticated in analytical philosophy, and the other is at home both in sociological theory and in existentialism. MacIntyre describes the first to be the tendency 'to think atomistically about human action and to analyze complex actions and transactions in terms of simple components,[14] and the second, as the tendency to make a sharp separation between the individual and the roles he or she plays, or between the different role-enactments of an individual life so that life comes to appear as nothing but a series of unconnected episodes.[15] Ibis disorder pervades the thinking of radicals, liberals and conservatives alike.

The conclusion of *After Virtue* is that 'Marxism's moral defects and failures arise from the extent to which it, like liberal individualism, embodies the *ethos of* the distinctively modem and modernizing world, and that nothing less than a rejection of a large part of that ethos will provide us with a rationally and morally defensible standpoint from which to judge and to act'.[16] MacIntyre pursues this theme *in his Whose Justice? Which Rationality? ,* published in 1988.

Richard J. Bernstein, in his *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* speaks of the 'uneasiness that has spread throughout intellectual and cultural life *of* western society.

> It affects almost every discipline and every aspect of our lives. This uneasiness is expressed by the opposition between objectivism and relativism, but there are a variety of other contrasts that indicate the same underlying anxiety: rationality versus irrationality, objectivity

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1[3] Ibid, p.204.
1[4] Ibid, p.204.
1[5] Ibid, p.204.
1[6] 'Preface' to *After Virtue, p. X.*

> versus subjectivity, realism versus antirealism. Contemporary thinking has moved between these and other, related extremes. Even the attempts that some have made to break out of this framework of thinking have all too frequently been assimilated to these standard oppositions. [17]

He points out that the debates and controversies that have broken out recently among philosophers, even if at first glance they may appear to have very different subjects and emphases, in essence have a single concern and focus: to determine the nature and scope of human rationality. But, he shows, they are 'still structured within traditional extremes. There is still an underlying belief that in the final analysis the only viable alternatives open to us are *either* some form of objectivism, foundationalism, ultimate grounding of knowledge, science, philosophy, and language or that we are ineluctably led to relativism, skepticism, historicism, and nihilism'.[18] Like Bohm and MacIntyre, Richard Bernstein shows that

> The problem is not just an intellectual one, nor is it restricted to parochial disputes about the meaning and scope of rationality. At issue are some of the most perplexing questions concerning human beings: what we are, what we can know, what norms ought to bind us, what are the grounds of hope. The malaise penetrates our everyday moral, social, and political experiences.[19]

After describing the outstanding themes in the post-empiricist philosophy and history of science, 'in order to show how developments in these disciplines have altered our understanding of science and the character of rationality in scientific inquiry,,[20] and after discussing in that context the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen

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1[7] P.l. Also see essay 2 above, p.191
1[8] P.2.
1[9] PA.
2[0] 'Preface' to *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p. xiv.*

Habermas, Richard Rorty and Hannah Arendt, Bernstein advances the thesis that 'the spirit of our time is characterized by a movement beyond objectivism and relativism'. However, he is not dogmatic about it. Rather, he is describing, as he says, 'the prima facie evidence for claiming that what is happening now is a movement beyond objectivism and relativism'. But he is quite clear that that is what at any rate ought to be happening; for it 'is not just a theoretical problem but a practical task'. [21] More significantly, referring to an earlier work of his, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory,*[22] Bernstein says that 'When individuals sense that they are living through a period of crisis, when foundations seem to be cracking and orthodoxies breaking up, then a public space is created in which basic questions about the human condition can be raised anew'.[23]

But can those questions about the human condition be also answered afresh without first breaking the traditional mould of understanding in which they were hitherto settled? And can a mould of understanding, in which the very life of a civilisation is cast, be replaced by another way of understanding, especially when the latter requires a most thorough recast not of the prevalent conceptions of life alone, but first of the method that leads to them? If it can be, then that can be achieved not by rational will alone but by a radical shift to a conception of life in which knowledge is integrated with the ethical, and cognition with responsibility-the essence of *dharma.*

This is not an Indian agenda. It is a Dharmic agenda of the true world order, towards which India down the centuries has aspired, the most, as every other civilisation has, each in its own way.

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21 P. 230.
22 Published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1976.
23 'Preface', p. X.

What is happiness? What is unhappiness? What is freedom? What is bondage? What is equality? What is inequality? What is justice? What is injustice? What is wealth? What is poverty? What is health? What is illness? What is good governance? What is tyranny? What h goodness? What is a saint? And, what is truth? In asking these questions, the *Mahabharata* is not asking for definitions but attributes. Not the definition of order, *dharma,* or of disorder, *adharma,* but the universal attributes. The answers that are offered are neither high minded but empty moralising; nor do they come from presuppositions which have in them already also their proofs. They come from what man is, from his very being, and for that reason provide man with an abiding foundation of world order. That is the meaning of *dharma.*

1 wish to repeat here, by way of concluding, what 1 had said at the Cultural Symposium, of the European Forum, at A1pbach, Tyrol, on 24 August 1985. Relationship between two civilisations, as between two individuals, requires openness to influence as its first condition. It requires, in other words, an acknowledgment of one's inadequacy. If one were wholly sufficient unto oneself, and also wholly coherent, then one would not need relationship in the ordinary meaning of that word. In the history of mankind each society has hitherto spoken to the others mostly from the notion of its own adequacy and strength. That invariably resulted in aggression and untruth. Neither Europe nor India has been an exception to this, although that attitude did not belong to the best traditions of either. What is required, above all, is that in the name of universality we do not disregard genuine differences in expressions of life, nor become blind to universal perceptions in the light of historical differences. Relationship requires an honest understanding of both. That could be achieved with the help only of the *other.* The *other* must neither be swallowed nor excluded, And in that lies the hope for the future.

21

MODERN INDIAN PERCEPTIONS OF INDIA AND THE WEST

The essays that are brought here together form a central part of the argument advanced in a much larger work which, unfortunately, remains unpublished. It consists in my endeavour to trace the tangled history of the Western encounter with Indian civilisation and its outcome.

Very different in its character and extent from the earlier contacts between the two civilisations .That encounter took place in the five centuries of Western Christianity that was brought into India with the arrival of the Portuguese on the Western coast in the first decade of the sixteenth century; in a century and a half of British utilitarianism and liberal individualism that formed the philosophical basis of British policies in India; in a century of modem scientific thought that came with the introduction of English education; and in more than half a century of Marxism which began being advocated from 1922 onwards by Manabendra Nath Roy. These Western forces, each in its own way, tried to change Indian society, some of them in mutual antagonism; and all of them, each in a different way, were decisively neutralised, scattered. Their philosophical force diffused, what was distinctive in them was neutralised. The real issues between the two civilisations, European and Indian, were seldom formulated. The encounter took place on grounds that were either peripheral or altogether misty. The philosophical foundations of Indian society and their social expressions were, in each case, either wrongly understood, or understood only incompletely, or not understood at all. It is only when we have diligently followed that history, that we

can see how the stated grounds of conflict and challenge had left untouched those that were the real ones; and because the latter remained unperceived, as they largely do even today, the spectacular Western energy that went into that encounter remained also singularly fruitless. That is what happened, requires detailed demonstration: that is, if we examine the aims which the Western forces had set out to achieve in India and not remain content with their unintended and subsidiary results.

But that is not the whole story. A great many Western misconceptions of India became, in the process of the Indian response to them, also the Indian misconceptions of India. That part of Indian history is even more tangled, and confused, but has affected Indian life none the less.

The violence and upheavals now taking place in Indian society, bringing to countless homes the uncomprehending sorrow of meaningless brutality and death, are a consequence of the confusion of perceptions on which we have constructed in the past four decades our collective life. The increasing violence as a method of resolving conflicts, and as a method of advancing what are perceived to be the legitimate interests of one group over another, is not only self - destructive, it is meaningless. I have heard some people seriously argue that this churning, as they call the present upheaval, is the unhappy price for social progress. I most emphatically disagree with them. This was the argument that was put forward, often with much learning and scholarship, as much in defence of the violence of an order raised on liberal individualism as of the order raised on socialism and communism. Today completely rejected in the West, and in the Soviet Union, it finds however its adherents in India to explain the present social and political turmoil as progress. On the contrary, this turmoil and its attendant violence are meaningless, for

there is nothing in traditional Indian conceptions of man and society which they must arise.

It is those conceptions that have been surrounded for long by the Indian misconceptions of India no less than by the Western misconceptions of India. The last two reinforced each other, as they today more than ever before, especially in the academic curriculum, in public policies nearly as much. How that came about is the history of the Western encounter with Indian civilisation.

But what also comprises the history of that encounter is the history of the land revenue, judicial, administrative, and educational institutions that were firmly established in India by the middle of the nineteenth century under British rule. What went into their foundations were not just the British misconceptions of Indian society but also the conflicting philosophies of utilitarianism and liberal individualism as regards political and economic order.

If they brought freedom from conflicts of one kind, they created in India conflicts of numerous other kinds.

I maintain that the public policies of today's India have exhausted their intellectual and moral resources. That is mainly because the premises from which they have so far been derived, of liberal individualism, socialism, or Marxism, have exhausted their intellectual and moral resources and have reached a dead-end.

The chief purpose of my unpublished work, and of the essays assembled here, is to show that the Dharmic: method of understanding the human condition, freed of the numerous misconceptions, that surround it, would offer, in the historical circumstances of the world today, a most realistic hope for human freedom. For we would have then gained a deeper understanding of what human freedom truly is, and order our personal and social relationships in that light. That understanding does not consist in a set of doctrines but primarily in a method, which is derived neither from revelation nor from some a

priori postulates concerning the ends of life. The Dharmic method properly understood, offers, as I hope to demonstrate, a genuinely universal ground of understanding; for it begins not with the postulates of spiritual faith, which one may or may not accept, but with the undeniable interrelatedness of human facts. Nor does it simply end with those facts and remain just a philosophy of humanism, but leads to a perspective, of inter-dependence of life, in which human facts are viewed. And in that perspective, there is dichotomy neither of the rational and the empirical, nor of the rational and the spiritual, nor of self-interest and the interests of others.

After discussing in the previous essay what the Dharmic method of understanding is, in contrast to the Western method of comprehension, constituting the real but unperceived ground of the Western encounter with Indian society, it is necessary to have first a review of the British aims for India and the different Indian responses to them. Both had obscured that method of understanding in which every movement of Indian life was rooted, where there was no dichotomy even of order and disorder, for one implied the other.

British Attitudes and Aims: Their Framework

British attitudes to Indian society were themselves at no time of one piece. In the main there were two conflicting perceptions: India as an area of darkness and of unredeemed barbarism, as viewed by imperialists and missionaries alike; and India as a mature and great civilisation, as viewed by Conservatives and Orientalists. Utilitarians and Liberals agreed wholly neither with the one nor with the other, which meant that in parts they agreed with both. The Liberals, for all their rhetoric about liberty and the inviolable worth of the individual, were often indistinguishable from the imperialists as far as their understanding of India was concerned. Nor were the perceptions of India in each one of these groups unchanging. Even in their own light

as they understood India better, their perceptions changed, often substantially. That story has been narrated elsewhere.[1]

The main point is that those attitudes, however conflicting with each other, and shifting from time to time, resulted in numerous policies for the administration of India, mutually conflicting and shifting likewise, and that those policies outwardly affected Indian society greatly, creating thereby a new context of perceptions altogether. Far more significant than even that, was the fact that-that context was itself a product of the larger intellectual framework of the eighteenth-century philosophy of the Enlightenment, the most central issue of which was: science and rationality versus faith and tradition. The agenda was to change traditional India into scientific and rational modernity. British imperialism in India, in that view, was a historical stage in that process.

Let us leave aside the question of sincerity, and assume that those who belonged to these various groups did really believe what they did about the civilisational darkness or light of Indian society. Let us assume also that the Utilitarians, and the Liberals did not really see any contradiction of a self-condemnatory kind in the positions that they took as regards the people of India and the very high value they had assigned in their thoughts to liberty and freedom. Let us not raise the question: how John Stuart Mill (1806-73) could, at the time that he was emerging as the great philosopher of human liberty, also be a servant of the East India Company from 1824 to 1858, where he

1 See Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians And India* (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1959); George D. Bruce, *British Attitudes Towards India 1784-1858* (Oxford University Press, 1961); Allen J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India* (Oxford University Press, 1969). My unpublished work on the Western encounter with Indian civilisation contains a detailed study of the changing missionary perceptions of India, and of the issues that have occupied the Indian Christian thinkers.

handled the Company's political correspondence with Indian states, and advance policies that were the very negation of his philosophy: maintain with his father that self-government for India was inconceivable: and, on the extinction of the Company in 1858 after the Indian mutiny of a year earlier, draft the Company's petition to the British Parliament in which he argued how the administration of the East India Company had been progressive and humane. There were not only two Mills, James (1773-1836) and John Stuart, father and son, but two Mills in John Stuart himself. Let us assume further that even the missionaries in India did not really see a destructive self-contradiction between their mission of bringing to India the saving light of the Christian faith and their support of what was even at that time perceived as the un-Christian character of British rule in India. Let us assume that they were perfectly sincere in their belief, when some of them came to voice that self-contradiction and became increasingly troubled by it, that their alliance with British imperialism was itself a part of the mystery of God's plan for India. I suggest that we assume all these, and put aside the question of sincerity, for the simple reason that to prove the contrary, as has been done, does not by itself take us far on the path of understanding the present.

There were now new institutions in India: judicial, administrative, and educational. They were not established all in one sweep, as the mechanical transplant of a perfectly finished product. In several ways the new institutions were built upon the old. It was not until the last decade of the twelfth century that Muslim control began to be established, with Delhi as its seat, over large parts of northern India. In the nearly six centuries of Muslim rule that followed, and practically ended in the middle of the eighteenth century, with the Battle of Plassey (1757), there developed the revenue, agrarian, economic, and political administration of a substantial part of India on systematic lines. Of these, the British incorporated in their

administration, in the first six or seven decades of the East India company's rule, much of the Mughal revenue and agrarian systems; which were to change drastically in the following decades, under the influence of Ricardo's political economy and Benthamite philosophy.

As regards the administration of justice, the Company Bahadur, or ‘the valiant Company', as it came to be called, settled disputes among its subjects, as the Muslim rulers had done in the preceding centuries, strictly in the light of the traditional laws of Indian society: the Islamic Law, as in *shari'a,* for the Muslims; and the law of the *dharmasastra,* for the Hindus. J. Duncan M. Derrett shows how, in the process of administering justice according to traditional principles of law and prevalent customs, for which they had first to obtain reliable knowledge as to what those principles were, the British became patrons of *sastra.*[2] All this was to change even more drastically in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century: with Macaulay's (1800-59) codification, in 1837, of criminal laws for all India; although it was not until 1860, a year after Macaulay's death that that measure was enacted. It was a product, equally with the land revenue system, of the Bentharnite philosophy of regulating social relationships. Macaulay achieved at the same time something of even greater importance: the introduction into India of European knowledge and education through the English language.

These three measures: changes in the land revenue system, new foundations of law and justice, and English education, were inter-related in one supreme objective-to Westernise and modernise Indian society. That aim was clearly expressed and passionately avowed.

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2 I J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India* (London, Faber and Faber, 1968), pp.225-73.

The missionary aim, on the other hand, was to Christianise India, not to modernise it; for the Christian faith and the assumptions of modernity were irreconcilably opposed to each other. Christianity as a social and political force had, in the West, practically given in to the secularism of modernity. Modernity could not have been the missionary project for India. But in so far as Western civilisation was also Christian civilisation, the Westernisation of Indian society was a desired goal equally for missionaries. They were resolutely opposed to the secular education that was being provided in government schools, and that question came up, in relation to the effects such education was producing in the minds of non-Christian scholars, practically at every missionary conference from 1858 onwards. From the time Alexander Duff (1806-78) started, in 1830, a missionary school, the hope was that, side by side with a life in the church, an education in a Christian school and college would eventually win India for Christ. That the education imparted in them had as its main aim the conversion of scholars was frankly stated; later what was frankly admitted was the fact that the missionary education had failed to secure conversions in as steady and large a measure as was hoped. Ironically, the missionary education expanded in the same proportion as its chief task, conversion of non-Christians, failed.

Increasingly, therefore, missionaries suffered from a dilemma. If the Hindu students were at all receptive to Christian education, in that very process they were being receptive, too, to all the intellectual movements in the West that were the opposite of Christian presuppositions as regards human life. If they were not receptive to the latter, they were not receptive to Christianity either; there being at work in their minds that invisible condition which profits from outer form but neutralises the challenge of inner meaning. The history of English education in India, Christian or secular, confirms the stubborn

Force of that condition. The same is true of the English institutions of law and justice in India.

At this stage we should observe the one most central characteristic which had absolutely distinguished the British in India from the Mughals: the requirement of reason and justification, at all times, in all acts of government. The founding of an empire on an alien soil had to have justification as much as the transactions of free trade Means were not automatically beyond questioning merely on the ground that the ends which they served were themselves within the bounds of reason. They had to be justified no less. Reasons for acting in one ay rather than in another had to be recorded and judged by others. Proposals for action had to be likewise recorded and examined. Everything was a matter of principle.

All this would have astonished the classical Mughals. Conquest was conquest; it needed no justification, nor was any ever offered. It does not seem from the record they have left us of their actions and of their thoughts that the Mughals spent as much intellectual energy on political principles as they did on the practical details of a magnificent Indian empire. To them there were no philosophical issues in the acts of governing. Success was a matter of personal example, not of principle. This explains, perhaps, why the great achievements of one could so quickly be undone by the successor.For failure was likewise personal, not a matter of principle. It is not to be concluded from this, however, that the Mughals were by inclination indifferent to reason or to principle, but only that their genius lay in working out in practice the relation between authority and social compromise; a relation which they perceived to be entirely of a complex kind which could not be formulated in theoretical principles of a philosophical nature.

Nor is it to be concluded, from the fact that in British rule every public act had to have a demonstrable basis in reason, that every policy the British crafted for India was, on that account, a highly

principled one. British rule in India often continued to invite, as much from self-reflecting Britons as from the Indians, the charge of hypocrisy and cant in much of its working. But that is quite unimportant. The main point is that the procedure of public justification and reason can very soon turn into a procedure of self justification. Given a prejudice, social facts are so perceived, and then so arranged, that they confirm that prejudice, which leads to a formal premise, from which a desired conclusion follows. Although in actual reality such a procedure is based on the logical circularity of presupposition and proof, where the conclusion is contained in the given premise, it has in its outward appearance the force of unfolding rationality that can mesmerise others quite as easily as it can mesmerise oneself. But let us leave this matter here.

The administrative, legal, and educational institutions that were set up in India by the middle of the nineteenth century derived their meaning, as already indicated, from the conflicting philosophies of utilitarianism and liberal individualism. They, in turn, derived their political content from the philosophical premises as regards human existence that had been the foundation of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The chief aim of the Enlightenment was the replacement of tradition with reason, and of faith with the method of the natural sciences. Tradition was medieval, irrational, and backward: faith was subjective, uncertain, and unclear. The method of religion was rooted in primitive superstitions and fear, the method of science in the universal laws of nature. Political thought had to be separated from theology, social life from ecclesiastical control, State from the Church, and the individual from the priest. Reformed law and education were to be the two new instruments of an eminently rational life of dignity and freedom. That is because they were derived, as in Stoicism, from the premise of the innate perfectibility of man and not, as in Christianity, from the premise of his wretched sinfulness. Laws

had to be clear, consistent and precise, so that everybody could without difficulty understand them. Modem education had to be so designed as to remove from the human mind the layers of traditional nonsense and the misconceptions it generated about the human condition.

Europe was being transformed by scientific rationality into the modem age. That goal was set up for India as well, on the assumption of the stupefying irrationality of the religious and social practices in India, and of the philosophical world view that permeated them. British rule in India would be the instrument of that deliverance, intellectual and moral, for the Hindus and the Muslims alike. Its justification lay in the agenda of civilisation.

Indian Perceptions: Their Framework

The Indian response, mostly the response of the English-educated, to the early British condemnation of the whole of Indian society, by missionaries and rulers alike, was defensive. It forms the Indian apologia of Indian civilisation. This context, of condemnation and defence, was hardly conducive to promoting a true understanding of the foundations of Indian society, which would have provided a proper understanding also of its disorder. Neither could there have been in such an environment a true understanding of the foundations of Western civilisation and the roots of its disorder. The imperialistic British assessment of Indian society and its history, undoubtedly based on ignorance and prejudice, was not entirely devoid of truth; nor was the Indian apologia without its untruth. That context of challenge and reaction, once set up, could lead only to Indian thought and life being wrongly understood twice over.

Understanding comes not from recounting the competing claims of superiority of one civilisation over another, especially when there happens to be between them also a relationship of the conqueror and

the conquered, as was the case between Britain and India. It comes from investigating the human issues and the methods to explore them that had occupied one's own civilisation, and then by approaching with a similar inquiry the other civilisation that confronts one in a serious encounter. Instead, most Indian writings in the English language, particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century to, the first four decades of the twentieth, in the field of philosophy, or religion, or law, or history, or political thought, or the Indian histories of these and of Indian art and literature, were, whether acknowledged or not, generally with reference to one Western criticism or other which had suggested the dismal inferiority of Indian thought. Both sides had their respective agendas. The question of truth about oneself and about the other had very nearly the last place in them. Or, rather, the truth about oneself and about the other was presupposed, arranged, and proved.

The Indian responses to British rule in India, which meant the new institutions that were set up and their underlying philosophical and political assumptions, were so varied, and in themselves so tangled, that it is not easy to draw from them any one set of inferences as regards their main direction. Their public expression, so far as the working of the institutions was concerned, covers a whole century and more: from 1838, the year that saw the beginning of modem politics in India with the birth of the Landholders' Society in Calcutta, to 1947, the year of the transfer of power from British to Indian hands, after dividing the country into two nations, India and Pakistan.

The aims changed: from bringing to the attention of rulers the numerous grievances of the people which arose out of official policies; to demanding a greater Indian share in the making of laws and in the administration of the country; to the demand for greater autonomy in both those spheres; to the demand for complete freedom and the restoration of India to the Indians. The methods changed:

from submitting petitions to Parliament; to drawing up political resolutions once a year and canvassing public support in their favour in England; to cooperation with the Government in making reforms and making the Indian legislature representative; to non-cooperation in order to 'resist the increasingly oppressive policies of the Government; to mass movements in order to end altogether an alien rule. The insistence on one method, as far as the last aim was concerned, was on constitutional means; in the other method, on force and violence. Through all these emerged, at successive stages, various conflicting trends within the Indian nationalist movement, as regards the question mostly of representation in the legislature and in the administration. The aftermath of that conflict of interests, the creation of Pakistan apart, is manifest in that very question in Indian politics today.

The Indian responses to the philosophical assumptions on which the British had built in India legal and administrative institutions, are clear enough in their outward expression but awfully tangled in their inner workings. It is in them, conflicting with each other, that one sees the Indian misconceptions of India.

This review revolves around the following four questions. (i) How was Indian society being perceived, its past and present? (ii) How did the Indian thinkers perceive British society and the civilisation of the West? (iii) What principles of social reconstruction were they appealing to? And (N) what was their vision of the future India? This is not just an academic inquiry. Every single public policy, every piece of legislation, crafted in post-independence India, has been a product of the answers to these questions. It is in them that lie also the roots of Indian violence that we see today. It is not until those answers are seriously examined that India can turn from the direction it has taken in its collective life.

(i) Westernisation or What is India's 'Own'

There is a long line of those, from Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) to the first prime minister of free India, Jawaharlal Nehru (18891964) who accepted with enthusiasm the premises of scientific rationality on which modem India was to build its national life, and who attributed the Indian social disorder to the degrading inequalities of the caste system, lack of education, subjection of women, customs and their irrational power, all of which they traced to the Indian world view in which this material world was held to be of little value, the highest value being, through denial and self-suffering, the ultimate salvation of the soul, moksa.

There is an equally long line, from Swami Dayananda (1824-83) to Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) and the earlier Aurobindo (18721950), of those that rejected the Western political and social assumptions concerning man and society; traced the successive disorders of Indian society to perversion of tradition; and avowed with passion, to use Aurobindo's words as a summing up of their attitudes on the main question, that "The return to ourselves is the cardinal feature of the national movement. It is national not only in the sense of political self-assertion against the domination of foreigners, but in the sense of a return upon our old national individuality[3] It was, again in his words, a return to 'the spirit of Indianity', to 'the magic of her thought and civilization, the overpowering touch of her religion', to 'the spell of India'.[4]

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3 Sri Aurobindo's article 'Indian Resurgence and Europe', in *Bande Mataram, 14* April 1908; *Sri Aurobindo And The New Thought In Indian Politics,* being a collection of his *Bande Mataram* articles published between December 1906 and May 1908 (Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1964); ed. Haridas Mukhedee & Uma Mukherjee; p.356.
4 Ibid, p.357.

(ii) Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi *(1869-1948)* belongs mainly to this line, but with a difference, which was reflected in the political and social ideal for India that he advocated in his *Hind Swaraj,*[51] or *Indian Home Rule,* first published in *1909,* although it was written a year earlier. Gandhi rejected the utilitarian principle, because 'It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity': the ideal ought to be 'the greatest good of all', not 'the greatest good of the greatest number'.

His concept of the individual was radically different from that of liberal individualism, the latter being a philosophy in which the individuals were seen as driven by materialistic self-interest, and therefore perpetually in a state of conflict with each other. He rejected modem education, because it did not develop fully the individual's innate capacities, in fact obstructed them, and tended to make him merely literate. Gandhi rejected, even though he had been a practicing lawyer, or maybe for that very reason, the whole basis of the modem judicial system, with lawyers, judges, courts, because they lived on the existence of conflicts and multiplied them. Laws and courts are instruments of the modem State, and can be profoundly unjust. Gandhi rejected, in his philosophical anarchism, the very institution of the State, because it was based on coercion and violence. He rejected Western industrialism, and the economic system that supported it, because both were based on exploitation and violence. He said: Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialism

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5 I am indebted to Mr. Gopalakrishna Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson, for unhesitatingly giving me on loan a family copy of *Hind Swaraj,* which is not easily available in libraries. It is the 1938 edition

can eradicate them.[6] He insisted, with equal passion, that India is to develop in the light of its own genius, not of the West, and its genius lay in the self-government of village-republics. He insist4 and reminded everybody, that 'No mere transference of political power in India will satisfy my ambition, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life'. In brief unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi had passionately rejected the British project of Westernising India. But he had rejected the intellectual premises of much of Western civilisation first.

(iii) Muslim Perceptions

The Muslims of India, an integral part of Indian society for very nearly eight centuries, rejected without any ambiguity the philosophical premises of the institutions the British had established in India. The Muslims spurned English education for a long time; because the ideas that were being spread through that medium, Christian or secular, were the ideas of an infidel civilisation. When they found, however, that the Hindus had from the very start taken to English education, and had as a result begun to enter government service in large numbers, the Muslims corrected their attitude and began to take advantage of the benefits of an English education, without ever accepting its intellectual implications, the essence of which consisted, in secular education, in a conscious shift from the unexamined premises of faith to the liberating force of reason.

It was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), who retired as a judge in the service of the East India Company, who eventually persuaded the Muslims to see the Western education as the means to the~ material and economic progress. In that he was fiercely opposed by orthodox Muslim opinion. In 1875 he founded the Muhammadan

6 *Harijan,* 29 September 1940.

Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, and was promptly put down by the mullahs for what they perceived as Western corruption. By 1898, when he died, the Sayyid had observed with much happiness Muslim I opinion swinging in favour of his educational programme for the Muslims.

Moreover, after the disastrous Mutiny of 1857, which the British believed, wrongly, to have been engineered entirely by the Muslims, his concern was to persuade the latter to disprove, by every conceivable act of loyalty, the humiliating charge of disloyalty to those who were now the paramount power in India and, as far as he could see, would remain so. The Sayyid pointed out that Islam, after all, was nearer to Christianity than it was to Hinduism; and he feared that, if British protection to the Muslims was forfeited, the Hindu majority would in the course of time destroy the distinctive identity of the Muslims. For that reason the Sayyid sternly asked the Muslims not to have anything to do with any political movement against the British, particularly with the Indian National Congress and its activities started in 1885. He was opposed, on the same ground, to the principle of representative government. For, once brought in, it would enable the majority Hindus to dominate the minority Muslims without end.

What is at the very heart of Muslim attitudes, through all their very numerous shifts, until the creation of Pakistan, is their perception of themselves in relation to Hindus and Hinduism. It is that self consciousness, varying in its content from time to time, which largely determined their attitudes to British rule and to Indian nationalism. It is the perception of a people who, once rulers, saw themselves' as separate, in religion and in culture, and in temperament too, from the Hindus that surround them on all sides with an eclectic world view into which most diverse elements of thought and life could easily be assimilated and lost. In that perception, the threat to the monistic faith of Islam must always be from the Hindu relativism of the idea of

truth, and the threat to the stem and puritanical Muslim character from that Hindu habit, a product supposedly of ethical relativism, where every sort of compromise could be made, should expediency demand it. This perception came to focus, in its political form, on the question of representation in legislature and administration, and became the main emotional force behind Muslim separatism and the two-nation theory. What remains to be investigated is the question: was this perception universally shared by the millions of Muslims that had lived for countless generations with the Hindus in the towns and the villages of India?

In whichever way that question is answered, what is incontestably true, however, is that the language and symbols of Indian nationalism were increasingly perceived, and interpreted, as the language and symbols of Hindu nationalism, even by those many Muslims who had never for a moment accepted the view that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations because Islam and Hinduism were two different religions.

In his book *The Making of Pakistan*[7], Khursheed Kamal Aziz recounts those symbols and that language. *Bande mataram,* or ' salutation to Mother', the song in Bankirn Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Ananda Math,* became the indispensable anthem of the nationalist movement; *Bharata Mata ki jai,* or 'victory to Motherland Bharata', became the slogan of nationalistic defiance'; *swadeshi,* or 'of one's own country', became the word for the economic boycott of foreign-made goods.[8] Aziz contends that the Muslims perceived their appeal, in one way or another, as Hindu. 'Indian nationalism has long been a

7 K.K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1967).
8 Ibid, pp. 80-2.

Hindu nationalism in essence'.[9] His argument is that Tilak's nationalism was Hindu in essence, and nobody' more so than Gandhi's.He cites, from Gandhi's political vocabulary, words like *swaraj,* or self-govemment', *satyagraha,* or non-cooperation', *ahimsa,* or 'non-violence', *Rama-rajya,* or 'the golden age', and so forth.[10] By invoking Hindu words, Hindu gods and goddesses, and Hindu concepts of civilisation, the Congress was appealing to Hindu instincts. At any rate, that is how the Muslims began to perceive it. According to Aziz, they saw the nationalist movement of the Congress, and its political vision of a free India, as thoroughly suffused with the spirit of Hinduism.[11] 'Nationalism and religion were thus allied in Gandhi's teachings. He found the substance of India's life in Hinduism.[12] The Muslims found the substance of their life in Islam. And these two, Hinduism and Islam, were two different civilisations that could not possibly be united in a common political order. That became the chief argument for Pakistan. And Pakistan was never simply territorial in conception, nor primarily political. It was a response in the first place, and in its deepest impulse, to what was perceived as Hindu civilisation and Muslim identity, and the perpetual threat of one to the other.

(iv) Christian Perceptions

The perceptions and responses of Indian Christians were the very opposite of those of Indian Muslims. The main task of Indian Christian thought has been to interpret Christianity in 'Hindu terms'. Nehermiah Goreh *(1825-95),* Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1899-1907), Sadhu Sunder Singh (1899-1929), AJ. Appasamy, Narayan

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9 Ibid, p.79.
10 Ibid, p. 102.
11 Ibid, pp.79-86, 99-103.
12 Ibid, p. 101.

Vaman Tilak (1862-1919), P. Chenchiah (1886-1959) and V. Chakkarai (1880-1958) are illustrious names in what is described as Indian Christian theology.[13] The reason why, according to Chakkarai 'The older missionaries and their converts and the Churches set up by them, with meticulous care had avoided words in Sanskrit or the vernacular', was that it would have reminded 'us of the fact that in India there are and have been great religious experiences and philosophies,[14] something which the earlier missionaries were loath to admit. To Indian Christian thinkers, Hindu philosophy was the earliest and the most earnest endeavour of the human mind to grasp the nature of divine reality. Therefore the missionary attitudes of earlier years had to be combated first. Conversion to Christianity as a uniquely saving religious experience did not demand repudiation of traditional Indian perceptions of human life. 'By birth we are Hindus and shall remain *Hindus* till death', Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya declared: 'But as *dvija* (twice-born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholic': 'we are Hindus as far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholics. We are Hindu-Catholics,[15] To him there was no reason why a man could not be a Christian and a Hindu at the same time, for the test of being a Hindu did not lie in his religious opinions. Brahmabandhab, and the other Indian Christian thinkers with him, thus separated Hindu culture from Hindu religious faith,

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13 Critical studies of it are few. See H.S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (CLS, Madras, 1969); Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (CLS, Madras, 1969); also D.A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah (CLS,* Madras); P.T. Thomas, *The Theology of Chakkarai (CLS,* Madras); and Balwant A.M. Paradkar, *The Theology of Goreh* (CLS, Madras)

14 *The Guardian, 5* November 1931, cited in Robin H.S. Boyd, op.cit. p.184.

15 *Sophia, July* 1898, quoted in B. Animananda, *The Blade: Life and Work of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya* (Calcutta, 1947), p.71; also cited in Boyd, op.cit., pp.83-4.

remaining steadfast in the former, while accepting Christianity as their personal faith, seeing no antagonism between the two.

To separate 'culture' and 'religion' in the Indian context is to lead to a profound misunderstanding from the very start, because both are indistinguishable in the concept of *dharma.* Yet there was a reason why Brahmabandhab and others were obliged to do precisely that. It was because of the setting created, and Indian Christians placed in it, chiefly by the changing missionary attitudes to India, first keeping 'Hindu' culture and religion distinct, and then identifying one with the other. To the eighteenth-century missionary, with evangelism as his main aim, Christianity had little to contend with the Indian social system, being to that degree supra-social: but the Christianity that was supra-social was also a historical, and therefore a religious abstraction, not a force for social re-construction. To the missionary in the following century, aware of the failure of the earlier approach, the purpose, if still evangelical, was now to permeate with Western culture the Hindu mind. Unlike his predecessor, he saw himself as a missionary not only of Christ but of Western civilisation as well.

This project had its own difficulties. Apart from the conflicts within Western culture, the larger part of which had by the nineteenth-century come to be anti-Church, the problem was that traditional Indian perceptions of the human condition were ever so flowing in their boundaries, and so diverse in their contents, that confronted anyhow with their ambiguity the missionary aim of cultural permeation acquired the offensive colour of Western imperialism besides. Having failed to make much impression on Hindu religious practices, there being in any event the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 that had forbidden any such interference, missionaries now sought to change Hindu social customs, more especially in the sphere of caste, in the belief that that would change Hindu religious conceptions as well.

This was the setting in which, by imperceptible degrees, it was the totality of Indian culture that came under missionary attack.

Indian Christians responded to it by separating 'Hindu culture' from 'Hindu religious faiths', declaring the former to be greatly superior to the culture of the West, and the latter to be praeparatio *evangelii.* They took the eighteenth-century missionary line that began in fact a century earlier with Robert de Nobili's Madurai Mission: hands off Hindu social structure, concentrate on matters that belong to religion. There being no distinction between the two in the Indian method of understanding human existence, the defence of what was perceived as Hindu culture meant necessarily a defence of what was understood as Hindu religious consciousness; just as in denying that the Hindus had any idea of what was perceived by them as true religion, the nineteenth-century missionaries had come to deny that they had any culture at all. Because of these misconceptions, the battle between British missionaries and the best minds among Indian Christians diverted attention from the deeper issues between Christianity and the Indian method of contemplating life. This happened several times in the history of the encounter of Western Christianity with India.

According to Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, who spent a little more than two decades of his life as a missionary in India, and to whom I have dedicated this book, 'the change in attitudes of missionaries from the beginning of the 19th century was very largely due to this strange phenomenon which Europeans call "enlightenment" which totally transformed the self-understanding of European man'. The fact that ‘even as late as Ziegenbalg and Plutschau a missionary could come to India with a real respect (and even awe) for the riches of Indian civilization, but that 100 years later their successors looked upon India as part of the area of darkness' was, according to Lesslie Newbigin, 'the result of the "Enlightenment", even though this new confidence

(or rather arrogance) was fused in the minds of its bearers with their self-understanding as Christians.[16]

The self-understanding of Indian Christians, from the closing years of the nineteenth century down to our own times, has been characterised by their understanding of *essential* Christianity in the philosophical terms of traditional Indian thought. It is characterised equally with their sense of being a part, as Christians, of the deeper fife-force of Indian society.

That raises numerous important questions, of which I should mention here only one. Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965**),** more than whom hardly any missionary understood the underlying issues not just between Christianity and so-called Hinduism but between them as two complex civilisations and social structures, readily conceded that, in the Indian environment, Christianity ought to be expressed 4courageously by means of the great wealth of religious concepts and terms that are available in Hinduism. This wealth is simply stupendous,.[17] He voiced, however, his concern that 'in the legitimate and necessary effort to use these Indian tools, soul and intellect must be bent on *expressing* essential Christianity, not on accommodating it, because if this is not done, there ensues a fatal confusion of points of odentation.,[18] The problem is that the history of Indian thought, and of social life, with an established tradition of adaptation and accommodation, is also stupendously rich in fatal confusions.

It is necessary to observe another aspect of the Indian Christian self-understanding: self-governance of the Church. It is ironical that, while Christianity has flourished in India for nineteen-hundred years,

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16 Newbigin's letter, dated 27 December 1979, to the author.
17 Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (Tambaram, 1938), p.372.
18 lbid, p.372.

centuries before Europe was Christianised, India did not have, until it gained political independence, an Indian Church. In 1813 the Church had been established in India by an act of Parliament,[19] but it was legally identical with the Church of England. It had assumed in India an astonishing role-of the servant of a trading company. C1 Grimes has sketched the contradictions and embarrassments the Indian episcopate suffered as a result.[20] He asks: 'Could a more unapostolic commission have been devised wherewith to endow the first episcopal representative of the Anglican Church in India for his tremendous task? It was, in fact, a travesty of episcopacy'.[21]

There were in India churches erected by the Syrian Christians, the Catholics, and by each one of the numerous missionary societies of one denomination or the other. They were controlled, however, ecclesiastically and in matters pertaining to their organisation, from abroad; most of the money for their upkeep came from outside India, at home they were dominated by missionaries. The issue whether Indian churches were mature enough for self-government, was continuously discussed among missionaries from the last three decades of the nineteenth century up to the time India gained independence from British rule.[22] The argument in the religious sphere was the same as it was in the political sphere. Government in India could not be transferred to Indian hands, however desirable that goal might ultimately be, until the Indians were mature enough to exercise

19 The Charter Act of 1813, 53 Geo 1H, c. 155, sections 49-53.
20 Cecil John Grimes, *Towards an Indian Church (SPCK,* London, 1946), pp.64-7.
21 Ibid, p.63.
22 Consillt Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement 1895-1961* (SCM, London, 1966), pp.143-63; M.E.Gibbs, *The Anglican Church in India 1600-1970 (ISPCK,* New Delhi; 1972), pp.355, 341~4, 350-70, 371-81, 38295.

that responsibility: neither could church government be transferred to Indian Christians until they had developed the Christian qualities required for such a task.[23] And just as the British Government were to decide when, if at all, the Indians had come of age politically; so the missionaries in India were the best judge to say if 'their Native brethren' had come of age in Christian piety. The process of Indianisation of churches began only late in the twentieth century, and then not without a struggle on the part of Indian Christians.[24] To deliver the Indian church from what a recent Irish missionary, Robin H.S. Boyd, has called 'the Latin captivity of the Church,[25] and make it Indian, was partly successful, in 1947, with the coming into being of the Church of South India.[26] But it was not until 1970 that the Church of North India was born at Nagpur on 29 November.

To interpret Christianity in the language of Hindu philosophy; to reject Western religious imperialism with all its forms; to be aware of the Indian Christian identity as inseparable from the greater cultural identity of Indian society; and to take in their hands the government of their churches and other institutions-these have been the Indian Christian response to the Western encounter.

(v) The Perceptions* of *the Depressed Classes: Phule and Ambedkar

The responses of what came to be called the Depressed Classes, or in its extended sense the Backward Classes, both to Christianity and to

23 The considerable literature on this point is cited in the chapter 'Christianity and Dharma' of my unpublished work.

24 See Eddy Asirvatham, *Christianity in the Indian Crucible* (YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta 1955), pp.131-62; also, M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance (CLS,* Madras, 1970), pp.283-8.

25 Robin H.S. Boyd,*India and the Latin Captivity of the Church* (Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 15-7.

26 Inaugurated in Madras, at St. George's Cathedral, on 17 September 1947.

British rule, were determined by their perception of their social and economic wretchedness arising entirely out of the social structure of Hinduism and the social philosophy that sustained it. That is, the institution of caste: in which, nobody quite knew when, some castes became untouchables. But that was an extreme condition. Even those castes that were not untouchables, but sudra all the same, were subject to much discrimination and indignity.

This problem of caste is nearly as old as the known records of Indian civilisation. There is, perhaps, hardly any other subject of Indian history that has produced a greater amount of literature, by philosophers, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, jurists, judges, social reformers, and politicians. Caste has been in one form or another quite central to public policies and legislation. Yet it is one subject understood so insufficiently that its fascination to the world of research seems very nearly endless. What seem endless, to the practitioner of what politics has now come to be in India, are also its political riches and profit. Equally endless, as the very recent months showed, are its reserves of inflamed passion and violence.

The depressed classes had in Mahatma Jotirao Govind Phule (1827-90), and in Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956), the two most dedicated and articulate voices in the cause of their liberation. Inscribing his work Who *Were the Shudras?,* first published in 1946, to the memory of Jotiba Phule, Ambedkar described him as 'The Greatest Shudra of Modem India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule.[27] Jotiba had come under a

27 *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches* (Bombay, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra. 1987; compiled by Vasant Moon), Vol. 7, p.4.

lasting influence of missionaries from whom he derived his belief that, because Christianity had upheld faith in one God, it had also preached the equality of all men. British rule and Christianity would be the two forces of liberation for the untouchables and the low-castes of India. He found them the embodiments of freedom and equality; and the Brahmans, of exploitation and suppression. The institution of caste, and its inherent degradation for the low-caste, was a creation of the Brahmans, who kept the sudras in the darkness of ignorance, and women under the subjugation of men.

Education for him was, therefore, the only means to freedom. He set up schools for the untouchables and women, and orphanages for abandoned children. In 1847 he studied Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man,* and a quarter of century later founded his Satya Shodhak Samaj, or 'movement in search of truth'. His conception of social change was drawn from Christianity in the main, but he never converted to Christianity. Grateful to British rule for creating conditions for the regeneration of the low-caste, and to missionaries from whom he learnt what true religion is, Jotiba Phule directed from different sides his reformative fire at the Brahmans of Poona, now Pune.

Bhirnrao Ambedkar directed his immense fire at Hinduism itself. The degradation and humiliation which the institution of caste has for countless centuries brought to the largest and indisputably a most useful part of Indian society, are products necessarily of Hinduism, according to Ambedkar. If caste is to be annihilated, as it ought to be, then what has to be repudiated first is Hinduism and its conception of m an. This is the substance of his voluminous output on the question not of caste alone but of the worth of Hinduism both as a way of thinking and as a way of life.

He did not think Hinduism to be a religion at all, but only a code of social law,[28] although in his scheme of things Ambedkar assigned

28 *Writings and Speeches, Vol. 1,* essay entitled 'Annihilation of Caste', p.75.

a high value to true religion. But Hinduism, even as a code of law, differs from other codes of law in that whereas the latter are changing according to the changing conditions of life; the Hindu social law, which is what caste really is, derives its force from the notion that it is eternal.[29] have, therefore, no hesitation in saying that such a religion must be destroyed and I say, there is nothing irreligious in working for the destruction of such a religion. Indeed I hold that it is your bounden duty to tear the mask, to remove the misrepresentation that is caused by misnaming this Law as Religion.[30] He proceeded with fierce energy to tear that mask, and, like every other critic of Hinduism, concentrated mostly------on Manu.[31]

The core of Ambedkar's argument is that 'Hinduism is not founded on individual justice or social utility', but 'on a totally different principle', which is: 'to be right and good the act must serve the interest of this class of supen-nan, namely, the Brahmins.,[32] He maintains that the Hindu ideal 'is an ideal in which the individual is not the centre. The centre of the ideal is neither individual nor society. It is a class- the class of Superman called Brahmins.,[33] Ambedkar says that "The parallel to this philosophy of Hinduism is to be found in Nietzsche.,[34] To him, 'Zarathustra is a new name for Manu and *Thus Spake* Zarathustra is a new edition of *Manu S*mriti., [35]But he would still not put Manu in the same class as Nietzsche (1844-1900).The reason for this, he said, lies in the fact that 'Nietzsche's supermen were supermen by reason of their worth. Manu's supermen

29 Ibid, Vol. 1, p.76.
30 lbid, Vol. 1, p.76.
31 See, for example, his essay 'Philosophy of Hinduism', at *Writings and Speeches, Vol.* 3, pp.3-92.
32 Ibid, Vol. 3, p.72.
33 Ibid, Vol. 3, p.72.
34 Ibid, Vol. 3, p.74.
35 lbid, Vol. 3, p.76

are supermen by reason of their birth'.[36] In any event, there is nothing in Hindu philosophy which can, in Ambedkar's perception, provide principles of social reconstruction. Those must come from Western civilisation: the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity. He maintains that 'Hinduism is inimical to equality, antagonistic to liberty and opposed to fratemity'.[37]

Ambedkar kept emphasising the point that the chief concern of the depressed classes, which in actual reality were the untouchable castes, was not complete independence from British rule but freedom from the tyranny of the upper-caste Hindus. He took the position that the depressed classes were not Hindus; were in political terms a minority, quite like the Muslims, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, and the Sikhs; and they must have, like other minorities, constitutional safeguards against the eventual rule of the Hindu majority.[38] pious sentiments of concern for the untouchables, as expressed by Gandhi, were of no use; what was required was the political recognition of their separate identity; that is to say, a constitutional provision for separate electorates and separate reservation for the depressed classes .If there were separate electorates for the Muslims, then why not also for the Untouchables ? Ambedkar maintained that the political and social problems of Indian society did not consist, as People generally assumed, in the antagonisms between Hindus and Muslims alone, but, even more seriously, in the unresolved problems between Hindus and the Untouchables.

36 Ibid, Vol. 3, p.76.
37 lbid, Vol. 3, p.66.
38 See Ambedkar's *Statement,* 'concerning the safeguards for the protection of the interests of the Depressed Classes as a minority', submitted on behalf of the Bahishkrita Hitakarini Sabha (Depressed classes Institute of Bombay) to Indian Statutory Commission, 29 May 1928; at *Writings and Speeches, Vol.* 2, pp.43046.

The 8th October session of the Minorities Committee, set up by the 1931 Round Table Conference that was called to suggest a possible constitution for the future governance of India within the framework of British rule, saw considerable bitterness between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Gandhi described the Ambedkar demand for separate electorates for the Untouchables as the 'unkindest cut of all'.[39] Gandhi maintained that the intolerable situation of the Untouchables was uppermost in his social concerns .Saying that he 'will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world"[40] and that he would 'rather that Hinduism died than that Untouchability lived"[41] Gandhi argued that there ought not to be 'on our register and on our census Untouchables classified as separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Muhammadans, so may Europeans. Will Untouchables remain Untouchables in perpetuity?,[42] Gandhi enforced his argument against separate electorates for the depressed classes by saying: 'It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatever. I do not mind Untouchables, if they so desire, being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages': 'if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with all my life.[43] When the British Government accepted, nonetheless, the principle of separate electorates for the depressed classes, Gandhi undertook, as he had warned the Prime Minister that

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39 See the Proceedings of the Ninth Sitting 8th October 1931, with Prime Minister as Chairrnan; reproduced at Writings and *Speeches, Vol. 2,* pp.659-63; p.662
40 lbid, Vol. 2, p.663.
41 lbid, Vol. 2, p.663.
42 Ibid, Vol. 2, p.663.
43 Ibid, Vol. 2, p.663.

he would, 'fast unto death'. Ambedkar gave up his demand, 'in order save Gandhi's life' as he said, and there was then concluded what came to be known as the Poona Pact on the question of adequate representation of the depressed classes in provincial legislatures. That in 1932.

What also came, in 1932, in the form of the policy known as the Communal Award, was the British solution of the Indian communal problem or rather the solution of that problem in so far as it was reflected in the contentious question of proportionate representation of various communities in legislatures and in administration. Itself a product of a certain logic, of perceived social divisions, and perceived as irreconcilable and absolute, it set off a logic of another kind: reservation and its psychological outcome. That logic is at work in India even today.

(vi) The Non-Brahman Perceptions

The Non-Brahman movement in Tamilnadu that began in 1916 was against brahmans but was not against Hinduism. It was against the social and economic domination by the brahmans but was not, at any rate not in its initial phase, against the institution of caste as such. It showed little concern for the Untouchables. From the founding of the Justice Party, or more properly the South Indian Liberation Federation, in December 1916, through the emergence in the late twenties of the Self-Respect movement, through the dissolution of the Justice Party and in September 1944 the founding of Dravida Kazhagarn, through the break with it five years later and the founding of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagarn, all the leaders of the Non-Brahman movement were upper-caste Hindus: Dr T.M. Nair, Tyagaraja Chettiar, C. Natesa Mudaliar, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, K.V. Reddi Naidu, S.A. Somasundaram Pillai, J.N. Ramanathan, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker (1879-1973), and C. N. Armadurai (1909-69).

Hardly any one of them had the wide learning and the searing brilliance of Bhimrao Ambedkar; but neither did any one of them have, perhaps not even the later Ramaswami Naicker, that cold intellectual hatred which had characterised Ambedkar's perception of all that was Hindu; and in that perception, all that was Hindu was also all that was uncivilised.

We still do not have a full study of the various factors that were in their interrelatedness gradually bringing about change in the social consciousness of the people of south India, more especially in Tamilnadu. And it is not until we understand the conflicting perceptions that were at work in the minds of men in south India, as in western and eastern India, that we can have a proper assessment of the Non-Brahman movement in Tamilnadu. What is of importance here is to see the forms in which the Tamil social and political consciousness was expressing itself in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and their theoretical content.

With the advent of English education came to southern India, as they did to Bengal and Maharashtra, the political and philosophical ideas of John Locke (1632-1704), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), and Mill. There had been in the south, for a much longer time than in the north, Christian influences at work. The method of the natural sciences, like the other two influences, had posed a challenge to the traditional ways of understanding the human condition. Those ways of understanding, in the field of systematic logic and philosophy, were developed and perfected from the sixth century onwards more in the south than in the north. The tradition of bhakti, devotional understanding of man's relation to God, was very deeply rooted in the southern life. Equally deep were the traditions of dance and music. They were not confined either to some royal court or to some elite circle but were a part of life in south Indian homes. The temple everywhere was the centre of the social and economic life of

the people, far more extensively than it had been in the north. All these for centuries had deepened that understanding of time and space which was now being challenged by modem Western rationality. That challenge was being settled by a shrewd acceptance of the benefits of modem institutions and a studied indifference to their philosophical foundations. The south Indian, like the Bengali, was quick to take the benefit of English education but, unlike the English-educated Bengali, was the least Westernised in his perceptions of life. He retained with pride his southern dress and his traditional ways of living.

But those that had taken an English education, and as a result had begun to enter government service, were mostly the brahmans. Soon they dominated practically every department of government service, and other professions quite as much, in modem medicine, in education, in scientific research, and most notably of all-law. It was the Tamil brahman lawyer that the British officials of the vast sprawling presidency of Madras came to hate most. He was intellectually cold, quick to grasp, slow to change, undemonstrative, not a man easily of warm sympathies, efficient, thorough, and ambitious. In these he was not unlike the British themselves. In one respect at least, he was even their superior: he could, without much emotion, adapt himself to a situation of disadvantage, where he would be guided not by abstract principles but by the law of expediency, without losing his sense of inherited superiority. Besides, as a priest, the brahman officiated over life's transitions, birth and marriage and death and the rituals that surrounded them, and he was paid for his indispensable services. In the country the brahman was often also the owner of large estates of fertile land, a mirasdar. From quite early on he had acquired, moreover, proficiency in the emerging field of industry. He had in his hands, above all, as he always had, traditional Sanskrit learning, and he had made contributions to the Tamil language no less. To the Tamil brahman it had seemed entirely natural

that, in being a brahman, he should inherit this earth and the heavens too.

The Non-Brahman movement had as its chief aim the elimination of the brahmans from the position of dominance that they had come to acquire in the administration of the presidency in which the Non - Brahmans wanted their own legitimate share. The aim of the Self respect movement was, by simplifying transitional ceremonies, or by doing away with them altogether, to eliminate the brahman as priest The aim of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was to eliminate the brahman hold on the political life of Tamilnadu and replace it with the non-brahman supremacy. Concerning all these the central question is: what were the principles of social and political reconstruction that were being invoked? and from where were they derived?

We do not have, as I said, a detailed study of this exceedingly important question. There are several studies of the political developments, social legislation, of one caste or another, or agrarian relations, of economic and industrial development, in South India. But hardly any one of them goes into the question of assumptions on which the social and political change in southern society was sought to be founded. There is, however, sufficient amount of material that suggests the following answer in its broad outline. The aim was to dislodge the brahmans from their near monopoly of public services and professions. That could be achieved, so far as the Justice Party and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam were concerned at different points of time, by constitutional reforms in one case and by a wide political movement in the other. To achieve that purpose, Hinduism as a whole did not have to be destroyed. Therefore in one case the appeal was to the utilitarian and liberal principles; in the other case, what was invoked was the Tamil identity as distinct from the northern identity, its two main features being the Tamil language and the Dravida civilisation. The perceived antagonism, set forth vigorously, was

between the Sanskritic and Aryan civilisation of northem India and the Tamil and Dravida civilisation of the south. What precisely were the differences in their respective visions of human order was seldom specified. The brahman domination was put forth as little else in its essence than the northern cultural domination. It was at first hoped that this assumption would be shared by the people also of Kerala, Andhra and Karnataka, their languages being Dravidian in origin and their culture being likewise so. When that assumption was not shared by them, for they had their own distinctive movements of social reform, the Non-Brahman movement in its extended cultural sense against the Sanskritic north got limited to Tamilnadu alone. Its theoretical basis, as distinct from its emotional appeal, remained unexamined and ambiguous.

The Dravida Kazhagam had set out to free the Tamil mind of the brahmanical superstitions and rituals. The intellectual premises of that agenda were derived partly from the materialistic strands in Western thought, partly from humanism, partly from Christianity, partly from the 'rationalistic atheism' of an obscure American called Colonel Robert Ingersoll, and largely from the Dravida past. These conflicting sources could only produce an incoherent programme of opposition to everything that even remotely suggested of being brahmanical. Hence its attack on the *purana,* gods and goddesses, the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* and above all the social institutions of *varnasramadharma.* The attack had in its armoury much derision, ridicule, anger and insult, but very little of philosophical substance. E.V. Rarnaswami Naicker looked more like an angry sage than a man with a new philosophy of social reconstruction.

(vii) Social Reform: Underlying Assumptions

In the nineteenth century, the Indian perceptions of India gave the impression of being radically altered. And in no other sphere more,

perhaps, than in social relationships. A new impulse seemed to possess the Indian mind. A whole new world seemed to have opened itself in which the human spirit would take new paths to fulfilment It seemed that tradition was under the examination both of a new faith and a new rationality. It was the breath of social reform that seemed to stir what was believed to be an unchanging society. The social reform movement that arose in the nineteenth century gave the impression of being influenced by the missionary criticism of Indian society. In that movement the Christian leaven was seen at work.

John Nicol Farquhar (1861-1929) maintained that 'From beginning to end the ideas that have led to reform have been purely Christian, and have had to win their way in face of the deepest conceptions of Hindu theology and social organisation'.[44] He further maintained that the stimulating forces behind the religious and social movements in nineteenth century India were exclusively Western, namely, the British Government, English education and literature, Christianity, Oriental research, European science and philosophy, and the material elements in western civilisation.[45] While most of the material used in social reconstruction was old, he concluded, 'Christian principles have guided the builders. In every case the attempt is made to come up to Christian requirements.'[46] Even a plain reading of the history of the social reform movement would not support any of these contentions. But Farquhar was a missionary in India and his views might have been biased by that fact.

The same claim is, however, made also in several scholarly studies of nineteenth century India. Writing on Hindu religious and

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44 *Modern Religious Movements in India* (London, 1924: Indian ed., Delhi 1967), p.442 of Indian ed.
45 Ibid, p.433.
46 Ib
id, p.434.

social reform in British India, J.T.F. Jordens claims[47] that the 'nineteenth century was the pivotal century', which 'brought about an enormous transformation in the religious, social, economic, political, and cultural spheres'.[48] In this he only asserts a view that has been in circulation for a long time. But nobody seems to have examined the *nature* of that transformation.

About social reformers Jordens says: 'These are the Indians who consciously reacted to the new situation and advocated deliberate changes in social and religious attitudes and customs, involving a break with tradition itself They saw change not as a slow adaptive process, but as a positive value in itself, and contrasted it with the negativity of existing patterns. As a group they had a great impact on nineteenth century India'.[49] The evidence provided by social reformers themselves, at the annual sessions of the National Social Conference, and analysed in detail in the second volume of my unpublished work on the history of the Western encounter with India and its outcome, would demonstrate that none of these propositions is true. Actually the very opposite seems to be the case with social reforms.

Since most of the social legislation in the past forty years, and a great many official policies likewise, have been an extension of the problem of social reform that seems to have occupied nineteenth - century India, it is necessary that we briefly cover that ground. Any study of that part of Indian history should, I think, revolve around four questions: (i) What view of social reform did the reformers entertain? (ii) What principles were they appealing to? (iii) How did they perceive their society? What understanding did they have of

47 'Hindu Religious and Social Reform in British India', in A Cultural History of *India* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), ed. A.L. Basham, pp.365-82.
48 lbid, p.365.
49 lbid, p.365.

British society or of the West? And (iv) what methods did they think would be most effective in securing social reforms and why? I further suggest that since the language used by the reformers was a technique of avoiding substantial questions, the social reform movement should be discussed, as far as possible, in the words of the reformers themselves. For then we can see that the language used today by those who passionately talk of social change is very nearly the same. That will enable us to understand why so many acts of social legislation today, as everybody knows, have remained dead acts as they did in the previous century.

As regards the concept of 'social reform', the National Social Conference as such had no official view. Rather, it was Mahadev Govind Ranade's (1841-190 1) understanding of social reform that is material; for Ranade was the guiding philosopher of the movement. By 'social reform', however, he meant different things at different times; at no time what he said being precise, clear or consistent. What is significant is that he was speaking a language in which ideas were stripped of their historicity, and words of their substance. 'The social evolution must take place side by side, if it should not precede the political growth that we desire to achieve', Ranade said at a public meeting at Allahabad on 25 December 1892. 'The evolution that we should seek is a change from constraint to freedom-constraint imposed by our weaker nature over the freedom of our higher powers': 'The change which we should all seek is thus a change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganised to organised life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human dignity. This is what I understand by social evolution, both for individuals

and for societies in this country'.[50] Ranade, whose life and work Bhimrao Ambedkar came to admire so greatly, believed in Darwin's law of evolution.

Let us assume that there is a law of evolution working in nature a law, as stated by Darwin, implies at least two things: (a) that law is independent of human will; and (b) that the process of evolution is irreversible. Whoever is an evolutionist must accept these implications of his belief. Whether there is such a law as the law of evolution is quite another matter. Since Ranade believed that Indian society was evolving from status to contract, authority to reason, it was inconsistent for him then to say also: 'We do not desire to give up our hold on the old established institutions',[51] when some of those institutions seemed to have been based on status and authority. That there ought to be no break with the institutions founded in ancient India, was the sense of all that Ranade said on social reform: 'We cannot break with the past altogether; with our past we should not break altogether'.[52] In one instance he would say: 'Social evolution will not allow you to rest where you are';[53] and then he would add: 'Conservatism is a force which we cannot afford to forego or forget'.[54] He would speak of how 'The process of growth is always slow,,[55] and how 'The best natures naturally want to shorten this long process'[56], a temptation that has to be resisted, 'for the teachings of

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50 *Report of the Sixth National Social Conference,* Appendix C, pp. 19-20; reproduced in *Indian Social Reform,* hereafter *ISR* (ed. Wajneshwara Chintarnani, Madras, 1901), 11, pp.28-9. Since *ISR is* easier to get in libraries and, divided in four parts, contains most of the speeches at the annual sessions of the Nati6nal Social Conference, references to it are provided alongside the references to *Reports* of NSC. The numerical after *ISR* represents one of the four parts.
51 Ibid, II, p.61; *Report of the Ninth NSC,* Appendix A, p.7.
52 *ISR, II, p.30.*
53 lbid, H, p.60; *Report of the Ninth NSC,* Appendix A, p.6.
54 Ibid, Appendix A, p.6; *ISR, II,* p.60.
55 Ibid, H, *p.30; Report of the Sixth NSC,* Appendix C, p.20.
56 Ibid, Appendix C, p.20; *ISR, H, p.30.*

the evolution doctrine have great force, because they teach that growth is structural and organic, and must take slow effect in all parts of the organism'.[57] Speaking a year later he would say: 'The whole existence must be renovated. The baptism of fire and not of water must be gone through by those who seek a renovation of heart such as this.[58]

Putting his faith in the wholly secular law of evolution, Ranade spoke, nevertheless, of God's hand in history. 'I profess implicit faith in two articles of my creed. This country of ours is the true land of promise. This race of ours is the chosen race. It was not for nothing that God has showered his choicest blessings on this ancient land of Aryavart. We can see His hand in history'.[59] Assuming that the Hindus were a chosen race, ignoring for a moment Ranade's doubly wrong application of the term 'race' to 'Hindu', and God's hand was seen in their history, then what could account for their disorder and degradation? Faced with this question, there were two choices open to him: (i) to deny that Hindu life was in a state of degeneration, then or ever; or (ii) to assert that God had a purpose even in that. Ranade took now the first and then the second position. 'The Hindu community is not a festering mass of decay and corruption', he said in reply to those who wanted to separate from that decaying mass; 'I have battled with this idea for the last 30 years and I shall protest against it, till life is spared and my voice permits me to speak'.[60] 'It is no doubt conservative to a degree', but there was nothing wrong even with that, because 'that conservatism is its strength'.[61] A few minutes before he had uttered these words, he had spoken of 'the many evils that we all more or less suffer, and which are so deep-rooted in the very vitals

57 Ibid, 11, p.30; *Report of the Sixth NSC,* Appendix C, p.20.
58 Ibid, Appendix J, p. 115; *ISR, 11, p.37.*
59 Ibid, H, *p.37; Report of the Seventh NSC,* Appendix J, p. 116.
60 Ibid, Appendix J, *p. 117; ISR, II, p.39.*
61 Ibid, Appendix J, *p. 117; ISR, II, p.39.*

of our family and social system'.[62]

Ranade's appeal to the 'principles of the past' went contrary to his faith in evolution; his talk of the 'guiding hand of God in history' went against his talk of evolution; his own recital of their history went against his faith that God had chosen the Hindus for his choicest blessings. He reached the climax of this extraordinary language by expressing his 'firm belief' that it was a part of divine purpose that the British should have been ruling over India. 'If the guiding hand of God in history has so favoured us hitherto, why should we despair now when we have been brought under influence of a still more elevating kind?,[63]

These inconsistencies were, however, still peripheral, though not any the less disquieting. The contradiction that crippled social reform lay at the very heart of Ranade's understanding of 'the Hindu past'. What did he think was really the matter with Hindu society that he was out to reform? 'What', as he had himself asked, 'have been the inward forms or ideas which have been hastening our decline during the past three thousand years?[64]

These ideas may be briefly set forth as isolation, submission to outward force or power more than to the voice of the inward conscience, perception of fictitious differences between men and men due to heredity and birth, passive acquiescence in evil or wrong doing, and a general indifference to secular well-being, almost bordering upon fatalism. These have been the root ideas of our ancient social system. They have as their natural result led to the existing family arrangements where the woman is entirely subordinate to the man and the lower castes to the higher castes, to

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62 Ibid, H, p.35; *Report of the Seventh NSC,* Appendix J, p. 114.
63 Ibid, Appendix J, pp. 116-7; *ISR, H,* p.38.
64 3. ISR, H, p.9 1.

the length of depriving men of their natural respect for humanity. All the evils we seek to combat result from the prevalence of these ideas. [65]

In their absolute form each one of the propositions above was false. They never were 'the root ideas' of the Hindu social system; but assuming that they were, and all the evils the reform movement sought to combat resulted from them; then, in that case, Ranade's call ought to have been not for reform, but for social revolution. Instead, his call was not to break with what he perceived as the Hindu past.

In order to have as clear a picture as possible of the perceptions that the nineteenth-century social reformers had both of British and Indian societies, it would be helpful, I think, if we have a brief look at the perception which Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925) had of the two. More especially his, because, unlike others in that movement, Bhandarkar was a great Sanskrit scholar, was among the notable orientalists of that time, and had made valuable contributions to historical studies of India.

Within the National Social Conference there were apparently two kinds of reformers: those who spoke against caste and custom, and those who thought that there was nothing essentially wrong with them and sought only to correct their excesses. In actual fact there was no real difference between the two. Although Bhandarkar very strongly spoke against the institution of caste, saying that 'caste is the greatest monster we have to kill',[66] and spoke against the hold which custom had come to acquire over the Indian mind, he did not follow the revolutionary path which that disapproval suggested. Neither did

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65 *ISR, H, p.91.*

66 *Report of the Eighth NSC,* Appendix B. p.61; *ISR, IV,* p.228; also *Collected Works of Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar* (ed. Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933), 11, p.515. Hereafter references only to the last two.

he follow the revolutionary line which his views on 'time' and 'force' had clearly implied. He did not share Ranade's belief in evolutionary progress. By definition, evolution is a process in time, and of time; it cannot be forced by will, human or divine; neither can it be hurried; nature unfolds its work gradually, in its own time. The work of social reform, according to Ranade, had to be likewise gradual and was a question of time, given which Hindu society would move 'from a lower to higher state of evolution'. Bhandarkar would not accept this argument. It would 'not do to leave reform to time or the slow and the unconscious operation of causes. It must be effected from a conscious intention',[67] he said. 'Sometimes we are disposed to leave the whole matter to the action of time', he argued; 'But time is not a force, it is simply a conception of the mind to connect events together and cannot work any changes. If therefore any changes have come on in the course of time, they must be brought about by the force in the human heart that leads to action.[68]

Bhandarkar's will-approach was a vast improvement upon the time approach of Ranade: but he proceeded to neutralise its revolutionary potential. Instead of showing how that force must of necessity flow from a collective social will, he made it purely subjective and located it 'in the human heart that leads to action'. Then moving in a reverse direction, he argued that it could come to the Hindus only from outside-from the English people. For 'the English people have developed the altruistic feelings in a higher degree than any other European nation'.[69] That of all human beings, the British were the most highly altruistic, Bhandarkar regarded as 'a patent fact acknowledged by all disinterested persons'.[70] This, coming from a well-known

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67 *ISR, RI, pp.* 184-5; *Collected Works, H,* p.496.
68 Ibid, H, pp.494-5; *ISR, HI, p.* 184.
69 *ISR,* HI, p. 189; *Collected Works,* H, p.50 1.
70 *ISR, III, p.* 189; *Collected Works, II, pp.500-1.*

Sanskrit scholar, would have undoubtedly pleased the British very much, but would have astonished and embarrassed any honest Englishman, considering the state in which even Victorian England was.

Bhandarkar maintained that it was only after the Indians had 'come in closer contact with Western civilization chiefly through the means. of English education' that they were led 'to take interest in the concerns of Indian society in general and consider its good to be our good, and has evoked in us feelings of justice and compassion for the various classes that compose our society'.[71] This view, that the English-educated Indians had developed under the moral influence of British compassion and a sense of justice, was as naive as his faith in the absolutely altruistic nature of the British was historically not so evident. Decades later Gandhi was to maintain, again in a somewhat sweeping fashion, that the educated Indian was unredeemingly hard-hearted.

Whichever way one looks at the sayings of Bhandarkar, one cannot avoid the conclusion that he was giving a call for radical change in the form that caste had taken and in the *mentality* it had brought about. But lest he was taken to be a revolutionary, a person not greatly admired either by the British or by the Indians, he proceeded to remove quickly any such impression. 'I am however not an advocate of head-long action. The motive force of reform should be powerful in our hearts, but they must be tempered', he now said, 'in a manner not to lead us to cut ourselves from a vital connection with the past. We should not adopt the procedure of the French Revolution, but imitate the mode of action of the English people, whose pupils we are. They have realised as great changes as the French Revolution sought to effect, but in a manner which connects them with the past history of

71 *Collected Works, II, p.487.*

the country. It will not be impossible to devise such a mode of action.[72]

To remove any suspicion that might have still lingered that he was, advocating, as Ambedkar was to do three or four decades later, a total destruction of caste, amongst other social monsters, Bhandarkar concluded his address to the Ahmedabad session of the Conference in 1902 by saying: 'the great discovery of the nineteenth century-the 'law of evolution-is receiving confirmation from every side. The law implies that there has been throughout the universe a progress in the material as well as the spiritual world from the simple to the complex, from the dead to the living, from good to better, from the irrational to the rational'.[73] If this were indeed the law which, like Ranade, he said was 'the law of God',[74] he had still to explain the continuous going down 'from good to bad, from what is bad to what is worse, and from the rational to the irrational' which, again according to him, the Indians 'have been doing for so many centuries'.[75] An explanation was never offered. Nor did Bhandarkar think it necessary to explain from what view of rationality did he regard one thing as 'rational' and another thing as 'irrational'. His belief in evolution had anyway negated all that he had said about time being no force. He had actually taken a full circle, and left us where Ranade had left us.

For Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar (1855-1923), another not-able figure of the social reform movement, the principles of reform had to come from British values, for that is what he was saying. For Chandavarkar things were mostly 'as pointed out by John Morley'[76] or

72 *Collected Works, H,* p.496; ISR, 1H, p. 185.
73 *Collected Works, H,* p.537.
74 *Collected Works, H,* p.537.
75 *Collected Works, H,* p.537.
76 *Speeches & Writings of Sir Narayan G. Chandavarkar* (ed. L.V. Kaikini, 1911), *p.55.*

‘as pithily put by Mr. John Mackenzie in his work on Social Philosophy'[77] or 'to put it in the language used by Mr Montague in his book called *"The Limits of Individual Liberty".*[78] He would remind his audience what Carlyle said 'in his essay on the *Signs of the Time pub.* lished in the year 1829,[79] or what Plato mentioned 'in his *Republic,*[80] or what Amiel speaks of 'in his highly thoughtful *Journal*[81] *or what* Macaulay speaks of 'in his essay on Sir James Mackintosh's History *of the French Revolution'.*[82] Chandavarkar would refer to 'the thrifting words in which Dr. Martineau has pointed out,[83] or to something so eloquently denounced by the late Cardinal Newman'.[84] He would support an argument by saying that the same view was expressed by 'Mr. John Friar Hibben in his article on "Automatism in Morality" published in the number of the *International Journal of Ethics for* the month of July 1895[85] or by saying something which was also 'pointed out by Mr. Lecky in his address on "History" delivered at the Birmingham Midland Institute a few years ago'.[86]

It is no wonder that Farquhar came to the conclusion that the stimulating forces behind the social movements in nineteenth-century India were exclusively Western. But that was because he had failed to understand the nature of the language the reformers were employing. For Chandavarkar had also insisted that the chief principles of social

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77 Ibid, *p.56.*
78 Ibid, *p.57.*
79 Ibid, p.61.
80 Ibid, p.64.
81 Ibid, p.61.
82 Ibid, *p.60.*
83 Ibid, p.74.
84 Ibid, P.74.
85 Ibid, p.69.
86 Ibid, p.75.

reform were contained in the *sanatana dharma* and no more was needed.

To those who cry down and oppose the Social Conference as the enemy of Hindu ideals and of *Sanatana Dharma,* here is the answer. We appeal to the tenets of the *Dharma* as the very key-note of the mission of Social Reform... We do not seek anything new-we desire to cast into the mould of the new times, the very oldest of thoughts which has been bequeathed to us as a precious legacy of the Rishis in the form of the *Sanatana Dharma....* In the name of the *Sanatana Dharma* then, the Religion of Universal Morality and Humanity, in the name of the ideal of old, which enjoins us to be 'Children of Light', I call upon you to go back to the heart of your religion and by means of the ancient light to learn to speak the language of today.[87]

How hollow, and so utterly insincere, the appeal to British ideas was, becomes perfectly clear if one looks at the speeches with which the various resolutions were moved at the National Social Conference. All of them appealed to the *sastras,* to the Veda, to see if the proposed reform were not in keeping with their spirit. Narendra Nath Sen (1847-1911), journalist and lawyer, president of the tenth session of the Social Conference, in 1897, in Calcutta, declared: 'Social reform, then, means nothing more than a return to the social structure that was built up in ancient India. Thus, there can be nothing much to object to it. One of the principal causes of our present misfortunes is that we have receded a very long way from the laws and institutions of the past, and adopted some mongrel ones in their stead. Our national decadence is mostly due to the later corruptions, which have been allowed to permeate both our social and religious systems. Our efforts, therefore, should be directed solely to the removal of these

87 Ibid, p.91.

corruptions. All that we call upon our Hindu countrymen to do is nothing more, than this'. [88]

This kind of language, invoking at the same time the principles of Western thought and those to be found in the Veda and the *sastra,* was at work in the Indian National Congress no less. The conceptual history of the Indian national movement should be written in those terms, for it is only in those terms that it can meaningfully be written and then it will enable us to see clearly the damaging confusion of perceptions in India's public life today. The only difference is that whereas in the social reform movement the same man would invoke in the same breath two conflicting sets of philosophical principles, and provide two very different foundations for social change in Indian society; in the political movement concerning British rule, it was two different groups that invoked two different traditions of civilisation: the Moderates appealing to the principles of liberalism; the Nationalists, or Extremists as they were called, Hinduism.

In what way did English education alter Gopal Krishna Gokhale's (1866-1915) view of human life? The fact of the matter is that just as Gokhale's political perceptions were profoundly unhistorical, limited generally to what he had superficially picked up from John Stuart Mill, especially *On Representative Government,* without understanding Mill's place in the battle of ideas concerning man and society that was being fought in nineteenth century England; so also was his view of the good that Indian society would gain by acquiring an English education. For Gokhale, 'the greatest work of Western education in the present state of India is not so much the encouragement of learning as the liberation of the Indian mind from the thraldom of old-world ideas and the assimilation of all that is highest and best in the life and thought and character of the West. For

88 *Report of the Tenth NSC, pp.8-9; ISR, IH, p. 192.*

this purpose not only the highest but all Western education is useful'[89].He did not feel called upon to say precisely what old-world ideas he had in mind from which the Indian people had to be liberated. Nor did he say what this 'highest and best in the life and thought and character of the West' was which an English education would naturally impart to the Indians.

Talking of the 'regeneration of India', which the British in his opinion had pledged themselves to achieve, he was quite as unhistori-cal in saying that "A great Eastern civilization, stationary for many centuries, is being once again galvanised into life by reason of its coming in contact with a younger and much more vigorous civilization of the West.,[90] Golkhale's perceptions were no more concrete when, talking of female education in India, at the Educational Conference held at the Victoria Era Exhibition in 1897, in London, he said: 'The retention of all that is great and noble in our national life, as it has come down to us from the past, and the fullest absorption of what is great and noble in the life of the West, as revealed to us by our connection with England-this is now the work which has to be accomplished before we can once more hold our head high as a nation.,[91]

The Nationalists had a radically different perception of the work which had to be accomplished. After the terrible events of the 1907 session, the twenty-third, of the Indian National Congress, at Surat, when, amidst much conflict and ugliness, the Congress broke up into two passionately warring parts, on the question mainly as to the direction in which the national movement ought to proceed, one led

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89 At a meeting of the Supreme Legislative Council, at Calcutta, on 18 December 1908, when Gokhale opposed the Bill to amend the law relating to the Universities of British India. See *Speeches & Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1966), Vol. III, p. 11.
90 Ibid, Vol. III, p. 177.
91 Ibid, Vol. III, p. 177.

by Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915) and Gokhale, and the other by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, and the earlier Aurobindo, The Nationalist press, voicing the perceptions of the Extremists, placed Hinduism at the very centre of the struggle against foreign domination.

To the *Nayak, 4* January 1908, 'Hinduism indeed is what is called Nationalism, and it is fostered by our social virtues. So long as you live and have your being amidst the water and the air of India, so long will your Hinduism remain in you either expressed or implied': 'You may be a Hindu or a Jain, or a Buddhist, or a Vaishnava, or a Sikh, or a Brahmo, or you may even be a Christian or a Muhammadan- simply because you are born of Indian parents and in the Indian climate, this general spirit of Hinduism will remain intact in you: 'Indians in general should practically be Hindus. It is Hinduism which makes us what we are'.

The *Yugantar,* the *Bande Mataram,* and the *Sandhya,* charged one time or another with what was called sedition, enlarged upon this theme. 'Make the Congress a thing purely for the Hindus or purely for the Muhammadens and it will last', said the *Sandhya, 17* Februaiy 1908: 'Establish it with the auspicious name of religion and it will endure; sustain it with high ideas of social good and religious benefit and it will live'. 'What is our aim?', the *Yugantar,* 25 April 1908, asked: 'Delivering the country, exercising the ruling power, or looking at the condition of other independent countries and being like them-each of these no doubt is within our aim'. But that was only a part of the aim. 'The question now is, if all these be only a portion of our aim, what then is our aim in its entirety?' The answer was, 'the whole aim is the protection of what is our own-the protection of that naturalness which is natural to man, the protection of the customs and ideas of India which have been determined by great men, the protection of the system shown by great men who were possessed of

spiritual wealth'. The aim was to protect *varnasrama dharma:* it was ibis, the *Yugantar* argued, 28 December 1907, which was being destroyed by foreign rule. The destruction of Hindu customs, in the perception of these papers, as in the perception of many orthodox Hindus, was the main aim of British rule, and was undertaken with the help as much of missionary Christianity as by political conquest. The *Yugantar,* 18 April 1910, said: 'The enemy immediately on entering the country begins to apply poison to the society, the religion, the ways and the usages': 'But when the society is based on a strong and eternal religion, this poison never succeeds in destroying outright that living society'; it 'makes the vital force numb'; 'Such a sleeping society is not roused only by cries or words of reform. In order to remove the poison, a stronger poison has to be applied. And this poison is no other than revolution. It is this awakening which is emancipation or liberty'. But from where would Indian society derive revolutionary force? The *Sandhya, 17* February 1908, answered by saying that 'we have everything we require in order to accomplish our purposes', and it was to be found in the Veda and *purana.* 'If you, Sir, accept the foreign bureaucracy in the land as a special ordinance of Providence', said an 'Open Letter' to Gokhale in the *Mahratta, 7* November 1909, 'we hail the new Nationalist movement as a movement of the hand of Dharma, presaging the disruption of the chains of evil Karma that have so long bound down our beloved country to ignorance and humiliation'.

(viii) Vivekananda: Vedanta and the Masses

There was in the nineteenth-century India another voice, expressing another vision, which, like that of Swami Dayananda, was the voice of a monk. From the very start, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was a clean departure from the traditional *sannyasin.* If his soul burned for the ecstasy of the Absolute, it burned with no less intensity

for the suffering of India's poor and hungry. Here was already a, source of that powerful inner division which he was able to overcome but incompletely. Longing for spiritual quiet, he bound himself in the chains of social action. There had been before, and there have been since, countless *sannyasins* in this ageless country. But none ever spoke in the name of the wretched and the poor.

The intensity of Vivekananda's feeling nature, expressing itself with vehemence at the sight of India's poverty-stricken masses, took its own toll. Every day of his life he alternated between energetic action on their behalf and a longing for freedom from that yoke. Nobody with any sensitivity ever failed to notice his consuming fire as well as his profound calm, both leaving their contradictory traces on his extraordinarily handsome face. His reaction to the fame that was suddenly his, on that September day in 1893 when he rose to address the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, was very characteristic of the man. Later that night, recalling the unrelieved misery of the common people he had known during his years of wandering throughout India as a monk, he wept. And from that day onwards he travelled through the length and breadth of the United States of America, giving lectures, holding classes, with one aim-to raise money with which he might set up a machine, an organisation of a wholly different kind, for the uplift of his people.

But not for his people alone. A few years later, at the close of the century, travelling in Egypt with some of his loving American friends and Emma Calve, the great French singer, the toast of Europe then, whose life was a tragic sequence of misfortunes and who had received from Vivekananda not just consolation but deep spiritual strength, the party somehow strayed in Cairo into that quarter of the city where prostitutes lived. They quickly tried to get the young monk away from 'the squalid, ill-smelling street, where half-clad women lolled from windows and sprawled on doorsteps', as Emma Calve was to record

the whole event in her *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda.*[192] But Vivekananda detached himself gently from the group and approached a particularly noisy group of women on a bench who were laughing and calling to him. He stood there, in their midst, and said: 'Poor children! Poor creatures! They have put their divinity in their beauty. Look at them now!' Then he began to weep. Silenced and abashed, one of the women leaned forward and kissed the hem of his robe; another, 'with a sudden gesture of modesty and fear, threw her arm in front of her face as though she would screen her shrinking soul from those pure eyes'. Vivekananda's compassion for the degraded, the wretched, and the poor, was not an occasional exaltation of human spirit. With him it was a settled attitude, and a very consistent one. He put it into social practice.

Vivekananda's perceptions of the past, the present, and the future of India were radically different from those that were being voiced by the social reformers of his times. They were radically different, too, from the political perceptions in nineteenth-century India. 'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them', he wrote to his Madras disciples on 24 January 1894:[93] 'Our modem reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course, I am a sympathizer in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but upon the *condition of the masses.* Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual strength?': 'This is to be done, and we will do it'.

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92 Cited by Marie Louise Burke in her *Swami Vivekananda: His second Visit to the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashraina, 1973), p.750.

93 Vivekananda's letters quoted here are to be found at *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrain, 1940; fourth ed. 1976).

In June 1894 he was writing to the Maharaja of Khetri: 'The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor'; 'The only service to be done for our lower class is to give them education, to *develop their lost individuality.* That is the great task between our people and princes. Up to now nothing has been done in that direction. Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries, and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings. They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them, and then they will work out their salvation'. Then in the same year, in the tone of apostolic anger, he was writing to Alasinga Perumal, his devoted disciple in Madras: 'So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred million who are now no better than hungry savages!'

To Vivekananda, just as 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity in man'; 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man'. He attributed the disorder of Indian society largely to the fact that education was wilfully confined to the privileged among the social classes of India. 'From the day when education and culture, etc., began to spread gradually from patricians to plebeians, grew the distinction between the modem civilization as of Western countries and the ancient civilization as of India, Egypt, Rome, etc. 1 see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolising of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way,

i.e. by spreading education amongst the masses', Vivekananda said in a letter of 24 April 1897 to Sarla Ghoshal.

Vivekananda always maintained that he was not a Pauranic *sannyasin.* An authentic *sannyasin* will have the character of standing, if need be, on the head even of the *purana.* He further attributed the Indian disorder to what religion had somehow become in India. To Bralunananda, another notable disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1834-86), he wrote in 1895 saying: 'Monks and Sannyasins and Brahmins of a certain type have thrown the country into ruin. Intent all the while on theft and wickedness, these pose as preachers of religion! They will take gifts from the people and at the same time cry, "Don't touch me!" And what great things they have been doing! -?'If a potato happens to touch a brinjal, how long will the universe last before it is deluged?" "If they do not apply earth a dozen times to clean their hands, will fourteen generations of ancestors go to hell, or twenty four?'--For intricate problems like these they have been finding out scientific explanations for the last two thousand years-while one fourth of the people are starving. A girl of eight is married to a man of thirty, and the parents are jubilant over it. And if anyone protests against it, the plea is put forward, "Our religion is being over turned". What sort of religion have they who want to see their girls becoming mothers before they attain puberty even, and offer scientific explanations for it?'

He continued this portrait of contemporary Hindu society by adding a few more bold strokes of the brush, saying: 'the present religion of the Hindus is not in the Vedas, nor in the Puranas, nor in Bhakti, nor in mukti-religion has entered into the cooking-pot. The present religion of the Hindus is neither the path of knowledge, nor that of reason-it is "Don't-touchism". "Don't touch me!", "Don't touch me!'!--that exhausts its description. See that you do not lose your fives in this dire irreligion of "Don't-touchism". Must the teaching, -

"Looking upon all beings as your own self" --be confined to books alone? How will they grant salvation who cannot feed a hungry mouth with a crumb of bread? How will those who become impure at the mere breath of others purify others? Don't-touchism is a form of mental disease. Beware!'

As the *Mahabharata* had done earlier, Vivekananda traced human disorder to excess, or *ati,* of every variety, even of *bhakti,* or the emotion-approach to God, and its institutional forms. There was that famous incident between him and his brother-monks at the Belur Math after his return in 1896 from his first visit to America. During the days of the Parliament of Religions, when he was the guest of John B. Lyon and his wife, whom he described as 'one of the noblest couples I have seen', one day he confided to Mrs. Lyon that he had had the greatest temptation of his life in America. Teasingly she asked him: 'who is she, Swami?' He burst into his childlike laughter, and said: 'Oh, it is not a lady, it is Organisation!'[94] It was this temptation of Vivekananda that had disturbed the other disciples of Ramakrishna. Longing for the blissful heights of the soul, but forced by Vivekananda into social action, one day they reproached him for having introduced into Ramakrishna's teaching the Western idea of organisation.

That touched him to the quick. 'You are sentimental fools', he said to them harshly, for when he was roused, he could speak fire:

What do you understand of religion? You are only good at praying with folded hands, 'Oh Lord! how beautiful is your nose! How sweet are your eyes!' and all such nonsense ... and you think your salvation is secured and Shri Ramakrishna will come at the final

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94 Memoirs of Comelia Conger, a granddaughter of Mr & Mrs John B. Lyon, cited in Marie Lousic Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashram, 1958), p. 103.

hour and take you by hand to the highest heavens...Study, public preaching, and doing humanitarian works are, according to you, Maya, because he said to some, 'Seek and find God first; doing good in the world is a presumption!' As if God is such an easy thing to be achieved! As if He is such a fool as to make Himself a plaything in the hands of an imbecile!

You think you have understood Shri Ramakrishna better than myself! Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense, which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as you have understood him, which is mighty little! Hands off! Who cares for your Rarnakrishna? Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what scriptures say? I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully, if I can rouse my countrymen immersed in Tamas, to stand on their own feet and be men inspired with the spirit of Karma-Yoga.

His face flushed, his voice choked, his body shaking and trembling, he suddenly fled to his own room. Overwhelmed, all were moved to silence. After a few minutes, one or two of them went and looked into his room, and found him deep in meditation.[95]

Vivekananda traced the Indian disorder ultimately to faults of character. 'We Indians suffer from a great defect', he wrote on 1 August 1898 to Brahmananda; 'we cannot make a permanent organisation-and the reason is that we never like to share power with others and never think of what will come after we are gone'. To the Dewan of Khetri he wrote, on 29 January 1894: 'Why should the Hindu nation with all its wonderful intelligence and other things have gone to pieces? I would answer you Jealousy. Never were there people more wretchedly jealous of one another, more envious of one another's fame and name than this wretched Hindu race. And if you

95 See Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel (first* published 1931), pp.124-5.

ever come out in the West, the absence of this is the first feeling which you will see in the Western nations': 'Three men cannot act in concern together in India for five minutes. Each one struggles for power and in the long run the whole organisation comes to grief. Lord! Lord! When will we learn not to be jealous!' To Sarla Ghoshal he was writing this, on 6 April 1897: 'We have brains, but no hands. We have the doctrine of Vedanta, but we have not the power to reduce it into practice. In our books there is the doctrine of universal equality, but in work we make great distinctions. It was in India that unselfish and disinterested work of the most exalted type was preached, but in practice we are awfully cruel, awfully heartless-unable to think of anything besides our own mass-of-flesh bodies'.

Vivekananda's conception of the work that required to be done for India's regeneration lay in three things: *(a)* education for the masses; (b) a turning away from the excesses of the *bhakti* and moksa doctrines and the ritualism that they had produced, followed by a social redistribution of pain and pleasure and inequality; and (c) a proper understanding of the Vedanta. To Nivedita he said in a letter of 7 June 1896: 'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life'. 'The dry Advaita must become living poetic-in everyday life', he wrote to Alasinga on 17 February 1896; 'out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology-and this must be put in a form that a child may grasp it'.

In the place of spiritual quiet, Vivekananda put energy, vitality. For withdrawal from the world he substituted social action. He reversed the order of action and freedom of man's being, *karma* and moksa, and put forth the view that the freedom of being is to be sought in disinterested action. At the centre of such action he placed the peasants

the labouring classes. To Akhandananda he wrote on 21 February 4900: 'While the little good that the moneyed classes, out of pity, do the poor, does not last, and ultimately it does nothing but harm to both parties. The peasants and labouring classes are in a moribund condition, so what is needed is that the moneyed people will only help in to regain their vitality, and nothing more'. Five years earlier he led written to Brahmananda: 'If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chances for all-or if greater for some and for some less-the weaker should be given more chance than the strong'; 'The poor, the downtrodden, the ignorant, let these be your God'.

Finally, Vivekananda perceived India's future, even as Dara Shukoh (1615-59), that most tragic figure of all Mughal history, had done two hundred and fifty years earlier, in the synthesis of Vedanta and Islam. Writing to Mohammed Sarfaraz Hussain of Nainital on 10 June 1898, and expressing his firm belief in the truth of that perception in several of his public lectures, Vivekananda said: 'Whether we call it Vedantism or any ism, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, was never developed among the Hindus'. 'On the other hand, my experience is that if ever any religion approached this equality in any appreciable manner, it was Islam and Islam alone'. 'Therefore I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible,

and the Koran'. 'For our own mother-land a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam-Vedanta brain and Islam body-is the only hope'; 'I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of the chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body'.

Vivekananda did not have much time left to him to work out the social implications of this perception of his, which had undoubtedly happy political implications as well. There were unresolved philosophical problems, too, with his agenda of bringing Hinduism and Islam together in a unified social order. In July 1902 his voice was stilled and he was gone.

(ix) Indian Marxist Perceptions:

(a) M.N. Roy (1887-1954)

When another Narendra Nath, called Naren like the earlier Vivekananda, but this time a Bhattacharya, was born at Arabelia, a village not far from Calcutta, on 21 March 1887, Vivekananda was still alive and at the height of his brief career as a monk and philosopher of resurgent India. Like Vivekananda, the other Naren was a most striking figure, whom his first wife, Evelyn Trent, described after their first meeting at Stanford in 1916 as a contemporary 'John the Baptist coming out of the wilderness'.[96] Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, while still at Stanford, assumed another name, Manabendra Nath Roy, thereafter mostly M.N. Roy. Taking another name was an act of another birth, of another identity. For, in the meantime, as an event of intellectual rebirth, Vivekananda and other influences, like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), were replaced in M.N. Roy's understanding of the human condition by-

96 See Sibnarayan Ray, 'Introduction', *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. 1:* 1917-1922, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1987; ed. Sibnarayan Ray), p.14.

Karl Marx. There is no evidence, not on record at any rate that Roy ever wept, as Vivekananda did, at the sight of the poverty-stricken muses of India, or at the sight of young prostitutes anywhere. What did, without much emotion, was to apply to Indian society, through an incredibly large output of intellectual work, the method of dialectical materialism, or historical materialism as he called it, or Marxism, to explain the condition of modem Indian society strictly in that light.

At the same time, in a Marxian combination of theory with *praxis,* in an equally incredible career as an international revolutionary, he tried to change that condition so as to bring about a world order based on reason, progress and freedom. M.N. Roy was a notable delegate to the Communist International, and a candidate-member of its Executive Committee, with Lenin (1870-1924) and Trotsky.[97] On 17 October 1920 he founded, at Tashkent, the Communist Party of India. It had seven members to begin with, two of them Muslims.[98] Later, at Kanpur, in December 1925, the Communist Party of India was established within the country.

What were the Marxian perceptions of Indian society and its future? We are concerned here with their theoretical content and not the organisational details of the Marxist movements in India, nor with their shifting political positions. Those perceptions are to be found in their ablest expression in M.N. Roy's extensive writings on Indian society, especially in his *India: Her Past, Present and Future* (1918), *India in Transition* (1922), and *What Do We Want?* (1922):[99] in the historical writings of Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi

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97 For details see Sibnarayan Ray, op.cit., pp.20-34.
98 lbid, Vol. 1, p. 179.
99 These three are to be found in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. 1.*

(1907-66):[100] and in the philosophical investigations of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. But in the first place Karl Marx (1818-83) himself had a certain understanding of Indian society. What is its essence?

Starting from his distinctive premise as to what *history* in its real nature is, namely, 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles', Karl Marx reached what is now his famous conclusion concerning India: 'Indian society has no history, at least no, known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empire on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society'. In this he followed Hegel (1770-1831), who believed that Indian civilisation was not a part of history at all, since, in Hegel's definition of *history,* its theatre was in Europe, not in China and India. They remained outside the domain of *history,* because the concept of the State was formulated for the first time in Europe and not in Asia.

In the same article, 'The Future Results of the British Rule 'in India', published in *The New York Daily Tribune, 22 July* 1853, in which Marx had concluded that Indian society has no known history, he concluded also that British rule was fulfilling in India a historical mission. 'England had to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating; the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of western society in Asia'.

M.N. Roy clearly rejected both these conclusions of Karl Marx. Let us take Marx's second conclusion first. 'Our history has been misinterpreted and badly written by imperialist authors causing the world to believe that before the so-called British conquest India did

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100 For biographical details of Kosambi, see V.V. Gokhale, A.L. Basham, and Daniel H.H. Ingalls at *Indian Society: Historical Probings in Memory of DA Kosambi* (New Delhi; People's Publishing House, 1974; ed. R.S. Sharma), *pp. 1-3 3.*

not exist as a nation and that the conquest meant progress for India'; the purpose of his book *India: Her Past, Present and Future*[101], M.N. Roy said, was 'to prove that this theory lacks any truth whatsoever'.[102]

M.N. Roy first stated what had been for more than a century a commonly held belief in the West: 'that the British conquest of India was a great step forward in human progress which has saved the Indian people from bad government and endemic anarchy. It is generally agreed that the object of British administration is not the widening of its domains, but rather the well-being of the Indian people who have advanced greatly under British rule'.[103]

He then proceeded to demonstrate, by analysing India's economic condition before and after British occupation; the British trade policy in India; the military expenses of the Indian Government; the very high cost of seeking justice in Indian courts of law; the immense value of Indian treasure stolen by the British; the facts about English education; and how, on the contrary, 'The British Government of India is a despotism, perhaps one of the worst in the world today. It is the violent domination of one race by another, totally foreign in language, way of life, tradition, religion and way of thinking'.[104]

M.N. Roy maintained that 'the imperialist theory of India being merely a heterogeneous conglomeration of people and not a nation is absolutely false, as is the idea that India must be administered by a 'civilized' foreign nation'.[105] He said: 'Every nation has its internal, social, industrial and religious problems'; 'India is perfectly capable

101 *Selected Works, Vol 1,* pp.85-153.
102 lbid, p.87.
103 lbid, p.95.
104 lbid, p. 104.
105 lbid, p. 149.

of solving her own problems without the intervention of anyone. However, the greatest problem encountered by national progress is not internal but imposed from outside. This is British rule'.[106]

M.N. Roy rejected with even greater fervour Karl Marx's thesis that Indian society has no history. On the contrary, 'It can be said without any exaggeration that the history of India is as old as the world itself"[107] Roy maintained. 'History clearly establishes the fact that England did not bring the Indian people a superior civilization and better system of govemment.[108] He drew attention to the 'well-known fact that many centuries before Christ and long before the birth of modem Europe, Indian civilization was highly developed in all fields and to the fact that 'Together with their religion, philosophy and literature, the Hindus formulated a well-defined social system at least 1,500 years before Christ. This system contained many of the principles of modem socialism, such as the concept of state and government elected by the people'.[109]

In this context M.N. Roy refers to two texts: the *Mahabharata* and *Manusmriti.* From both these he takes what he perceived to be the fundamental principle defining the relationship between king and state.[110] He quotes the *Mahabharata* as saying: 'The duty of a king is to maintain and defend justice and not merely to follow his own whims. The king is the protector of the world; if he conducts himself wisely, he will be honoured as a god on earth; if not, it will be his undoing. All creation is supported by justice which, in turn, depends on the king'. He refers to Manu as extending this principle in that 'if a king

106 Ibid, p. 149.
107 Ibid, p.95.
108 Ibid, p.101.
109 Ibid, p.95.
110 Ibid, pp.95-6.

governs despotically, he loses not only the right to reign, but also his ve*ry* life. The king who oppresses his kingdom through ignorance, loses his throne and his life as do his relatives'. Roy spoke of the growth of trade and industry, side by side with philosophy, religion, and political thought, as another example of the progress of ancient India.

M.N. Roy's understanding of the essential nature of India society, as he expressed it in *India: Her Past, Present and Future,* may best be summarised, in Marxian fashion, in the form of the following eleven theses of his.

1. 'India began life in the dim past, questioning the reason for her existence. Since that time, the moral and intellectual life of India has been based on the ability and courage to respond to these questions. Each of the various sects and philosophical schools interprets the question of existence in its own way. The mutually agreeable solution arrived at constitutes the spirit and culture of India'.[111]

2. 'Each individual, each nation, has its own character. The purpose of a national life is to explain and express this identity, as much for its own satisfaction as to help human society move towards its goal. All its efforts, all its activities, all its undertakings, always revolve around this axis. When a nation loses sight of its goal and busies itself instead with egoistic interests, deluding itself that it is the only nation worthy of dominating the rest of the world, it destroys the equilibrium of the community'[112]

3. 'India has never possessed the insane idea of wanting to be master of the world'.[113]

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111 Ibid, pp.91-2.
112 Ibid, p.92.
113 Ibid, p.94.

4. 'Long before any other country had organized itself into a single community with a common ideal, India was united': 'The secret of India's unity lies in freedom of thought and identity of conviction, that is the conviction the Hindus derive from the intimate perception of. truth, each in his own way'.[114]

5. 'It is in the Vedanta that Indo-Aryan philosophy reaches its highest development. Its teaching is that all which exists is one and indivisible': 'In fact, to discover unity in apparent diversity has been the object of all our endeavour since the beginning of history. The Indo-Aryans, in developing the philosophy of the Vedanta, have made a great contribution not only for India, but for the whole world'. 'This concept of the unity of the universe, the realization of the identity of the individual with cosmic existence, is India's contribution to the progress of humanity'.[115]

6. 'One of the greatest paradoxes in human history is that all the invaders who came to India with the idea of conquering were themselves conquered and peacefully absorbed into the country': 'The most amazing aspect in the history of India is that all those waves of foreign invasions and the troubles resulting from them have never before been able to affect the intimate life of the nation. Strong nations with varying levels of culture have plunged into India, creating some superficial disturbance and then becoming overpowered by her deep tranquility and wisdom, leaving sometimes a slight trace on national life, [116]

7. 'Soon after taking the imperial throne, the Mohammedan invaders ceased being foreigners; they gradually occupied the whole country which they gladly adopted as their own'. 'With the exception

114 Ibid, pp.93 and 91.
115 Ibid, pp.94 and 92.
116 Ibid, pp.90-1.

of three or four individual invaders who pillaged India, the Mohammedan monarchs never sent a penny of public revenue out of country. Wealth produced by the country was invested in the land . 1hus benefiting the people themselves and not a group of foreign exploiters. The Mohammedan government was politically and economically as indigenous as if it had been Hindu'. 'The Mohammedan rulers never passed laws aimed at weakening the people, nor did they have a distant homeland, the well-being of which was uppermost in their minds whilst governing India. They did not have to protect and develop the commerce and industry of their country at the cost of the economic prosperity of the country they dominated. They were not obliged to exploit and starve the Indian villagers and artisans to death, in order to provide means for the material advancement of a distant land. The Mohammedans adopted India as their own forming an integral part of the society. Their government was in all aspects indigenous, maintained and directed equally by Hindus and Mohammedans'. [117]

8. 'Indians are traditionally peaceful. In their long history of political power and economic prosperity, they did not once conquer or oppress other nations. The Indo-Aryan temperament is characterized by harmony in personal, social, national and international life. Egotistic patriotism or aggressive nationalism which mark the progress of Western civilization, has never been highly thought of by India. Hindu socio-political organisation has never aimed at insatiable expansion at the cost of others. Instead, it has planned and succeeded in establishing an institution to teach the art of social harmony and the science of co-operation among all the members. This organisation was not founded so much on rights and prerogatives as on the desire

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117 Ibid, pp.98-9.

for mutual sacrifice'.[118]

9. 'The Indian did not worry about the form or constitution of his country’s government so long as he could continue to advance towards social and intellectual perfection. He did not wish to become i slave to exaggerated necessities; he was content with little and much of his spare time was dedicated to spiritual, intellectual and moral matters'.[119]

10. 'The fertility of the earth and dexterity of the people were able to satisfy all the country's needs, until the greedy Europeans arrived. The English in particular robbed the people of all their wealth, all the products of their daily work and of their soil. British rule has forced India into a situation where the people have to devote all their time and energy to mere subsistence'. 'Their traditional concept of life, based on spiritualism, has not changed. Unlike their brothers in the West, their idea of necessity was not to become ever more insatiable. The Indians do not expect the rest of the world to serve them. It is their government which has changed. When the latter, obeying its national instinct, brought cruel devastation which threatened to destroy the traditional socio-economic structure of peaceful India, the people found themselves, for the first time in their fives, forced to concentrate all their energy on the political condition of their country'.[120]

11. 'To ensure her very existence, India must be free. To continue as part of the British empire for another fifty years would bring about the loss and death of one of the oldest and noblest branches of humanity'.[121]

The foregoing theses of M.N. Roy owed nothing to Marxism as a method of understanding the human condition. If I have summarised,

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118 Ibid, p.142.
119 Ibid, pp.142-3.
120 Ibid, p.143.
121 Ibid, p.148.

in his own words, his perceptions in 1918 of the past, present and future of Indian society, it is because, four years later, he would take an entirely different view of India.

India in Transition[122], published in 1922, is one of the major works of M.N. Roy and has had considerable influence upon the Marxist perceptions of India. He would now 'investigate the past, analyse the present and visualize the future, from the point of view of Historical Materialism'.[123] What precisely did that point of view entail in philosophical terms, and whether, its own postulates unexamined, it could be applied wholesale to explaining Indian society, was never clarified by Roy. He complained that 'The most outstanding feature of the Indian national movement has been its lack of theoretical foundation'.[124] 'The Indian people is engaged in a social struggle of historic and to a certain extent of unprecedented character. There must be a socio-political philosophy behind this great movement', which is to be found, he argued, neither in the 'antiquated religious ideology' of what he described as orthodox nationalism, nor in 'the impotent constitutionalism of the Moderates', nor even in the 'imagination of great men'; but it 'will be evolved out of the material forces making the birth, growth and success of such a struggle possible. To study our social conditions, actual as well as of the past, and to watch the evolution of the economic forces is indispensable for those who desire to understand that the people of India are progressing along a course common to the entire human race'.[125]

These formulations uncritically assume a great many things, just as the theses advanced in *India: Her Past, Present and Future* had done in 1918. In any case, the M.N. Roy of *India in* Transition' seemed to be a

122 Ibid, pp. 183-375.
123 Ibid, p.186.
124 Ibid, p. 188.
125 Ibid, p. 188.

very different man from the M.N. Roy of 1918. At least on some essential issues: in terms of which alone would Indian society now be perceived, assessed, and sought to be changed.

Was British rule an unconscious instrument of history, to bring India on the modem path of social progress, in its deepest meaning an instrument of the Enlightenment unfolding a new world-order based on science, Reason and secular Law? Was British imperialism a historically necessary tool of Western civilisation? Without even mentioning his thesis of 1918, that British rule was the worst despotism that the world has ever known, M.N. Roy would now maintain that British rule was that 'more advanced social factor' which, on the ruins of the Mahratta nationalism, 'had to appear on the field in order to build a political institution appropriate to the situation; a social factor that could count upon the tacit support of the people at large by advancing social progress; a social factor that could put an end to the ruinous civil wars and inaugurate an era of economic reconstruction and political peace'.[126] 'The British East India Company happened to embody the social force which alone was able to secure what the Indian people badly needed. This was a form of government which could bring peace and order to the country'.[127]

He now put forward the thesis that 'The glorious role of freeing the people from feudal fetters did not fall to the lot of the Indian middleclass libertarians. It was misappropriated by the British bourgeoisie, represented by the East India Company'.[128] Still more significantly, M.N. Roy now maintained that the British conquest of India was not simply an accident. If it could be called that, then it was 'one of those accidents which are not very rare in human history-accidents precipitated

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126 Ibid, p.299.
127 Ibid, p.300.
128 Ibid, pp.301-2.

by the coincidence of events and forces developing with method, and in conformity with definite material laws',[129] which, in 'Roy's understanding, determine all human progress. He was at this time fully in line with Marxian historicism.

But nowhere in his Marxist writings concerning India does M.N. Roy state what those 'definite material laws' are which determine all human progress, if only to restate the Marxian concept of *history,* in the theoretical framework of which he was perceiving India. The point here is that, given Roy's understanding of historical materialism, and in that light his explanation of the British capitalist episode in the flow of Indian history, there arose in the Indian Marxist perceptions of Indian society an embarrassing *theoretical* contradiction. What that contradiction was becomes clear most of all in Roy's analysis of the disastrous impact of British rule on the artisans and handicrafts of India.

India in Transition refers to it repeatedly as an illustration of the social displacement, unemployment, and poverty arising from British policies. Briefly stated, M.N. Roy's thesis on that subject is as follows.[130] When the British first came to India, a prosperous artisan class existed. But, unable to compete with the imported machine-made commodities, this artisan class was soon forced to abandon its occupation and go back to the land. The destruction of Indian handicrafts was brought about more by violence than by peaceful competition, so as to secure a monopoly for the imported goods from Britain. A third of all the artisans engaged in producing handicrafts were weavers. The village weaver was gradually eliminated as an economic factor of the community. The fact that the craft of weaving had been for centuries a highly developed craft in India, the ultimate

129 Ibid, p.301.
130 Ibid, see pp.211-3, 218, 250-1, 256, 267.

undermining of the weaver may be looked upon as the death of the rural artisan class. The same process of destruction was going on in all other craft industries. Because large-scale machine industry was not allowed to grow in India, only a small fraction of the tens of millions living by handicrafts could be absorbed as factory workers in such industries that did come up, forcing many others to return to land, crowding others out, or to stick to their profession and somehow earn their livelihood. This huge mass of rural population, dislodged from its occupation by machine production, could not be turned into a city proletariat in the same manner as in European countries. Thus came into existence the large rural population living on agricultural wages, as floating field workers, moving from one part of the country to another, uprooted and hopeless. It shows that machine production eliminated from the field of social economics an older form of production without replacing it, as in other modem countries, by large-scale capitalist industries. This method of imperialist exploitation dislocated the social organism.

Was *this* social progress? M.N. Roy did not raise this question, even though he was obliged to do so, given his concern with theoretical foundations. He had assigned the East India Company the 'glorious role of freeing the people from feudal fetters' which, in the Marxian theory, ought to have been achieved by the Indian bourgeoisie but was achieved by the British bourgeoisie instead. Feudalism, whatever else it is, is primarily a form of economic production and economic and social relations. In the Marxist theory the artisans and handicrafts belong to the feudal mode of production. In the dialectical movement of history they were bound to be superseded by industrial capitalism, as the latter was bound to be superseded by socialism and communism. In. destroying them, even 9 violently, the British in India were only fulfilling the Marxian agenda of *history,* even if without knowing that that is what they were doing.

In theory M.N. Roy was committed to applauding them for that achievement. But in actual fact he was arguing that the elimination of Indian handicrafts by cheap machine-made goods from Britain was an economic and social devastation of great magnitude.

This contradiction comes into view even more clearly when he complains that the British prevented as long as they could the introduction of advanced machinery into India, so as to exploit India the more by keeping it industrially backward; and maintains at the same time that if Indian agriculture were to be modernised by means of machinery, it would be yet another economic disaster. 'The growth of large-scale farms worked by machinery would deprive millions and millions of people today living on land, of the means of livelihood', he said: 'The population is so vast that it would be impossible for the modem industries, even if they increase to a hundred-fold their present magnitude, to absorb the mass of unemployed which would come into existence as a result of an extensive introduction of laboursaving machinery in agriculture. Besides, the growth of industry would throw into unemployment another large section of the population-the artisans'. [131]

Very nearly in the same breath M.N. Roy was then advocating the opposite thesis: 'we cannot compete successfully against machine made products by primitive handicrafts'.[132] That is because, he now maintained, 'the progress of science has made the life of man more comfortable than in the ancient days. Modem machinery saves human labour. Why should a hundred people bend their backs before the loom when the same work can be done by one person with the help of a machine, which is also the creation of man? When men knew of no other way, they made, the women spin with the primitive Charkha.

131 lbid, p.243.
132 *In What Do We Want, at Selected Works,* Vol 1, p.522.

Now the work of several hundred Charkhas can be done in the course of one hour by the use of machinery. Why should we condemn our womanhood to the ancient drudgery?'[133] He now argued that 'Cloth produced in the factories by the use of machines is cheaper than that made on the handlooms. Machine-made articles are always cheaper than hand-made ones because of large scale production': 'Machine made cloth is also more comfortable to wear than Khaddar, and why should we not be comfortable? We are human beings after all. U Swaraj wants to take us back to barbarism, we don't want it': 'We have been kept back too long already; why should we go further backward into primitive savagery?[134] These formulations were put forward by M.N. Roy in *What Do We Want,* a Marxist practical agenda for India derived from *India in Transition,* both published in the same year, 1922.

The two sets of the foregoing theses on the same subject were not just contradictory; they were confused. Their confusion belongs to the theory of the dialectical stages of development: slavery-feudalism-capitalism-socialism. In that theory, machine-based industrial economy is the ultimate form of social production, towards which the material laws of history have been moving mankind. But every known fact about Indian history suggests that the theory of historical materialism is a European myth, at any rate a theory which may plausibly explain social formations in Europe but runs into problems when confronted with Indian material. There has never been slavery in India as in European antiquity. Indian feudalism has been very different from feudalism in Europe, when both are viewed in the totality of the two vastly different social systems of India and Europe. Since the largest part of Indian society lives in villages and is primarily

133 Ibid, p.522.
134 Ibid, p.522.

agricultural, it will not, in obedience to an assumed law of historical development, turn into a primarily industrialised society.

In that event, either the theory of historical materialism is to be reconsidered, modified drastically, or abandoned as theoretically useless to explain the Indian situation. Or the facts concerning rural India are to be so perceived, and so arranged, that they pose no challenge whatsoever to the theory. In his later years M.N. Roy would take the first course, and abandon Marxism as an adequate explanation of the human condition. But *in India in Transition* he adopted the second course. And there, too, he takes conflicting positions on practically every issue concerning India.

As another illustration of it, take the issue whether India was ever a nation. In *India: her Past, Present and Future* M.N. Roy had advanced the thesis that 'the imperialist theory of India being merely a heterogeneous conglomeration of people and not a nation is absolutely false'. Four years later, in *India in Transition,* he was advocating the very opposite view. 'At the time of the British conquest, the Indian people were nothing but a mass of humanity, in the period of transition from a disintegrated feudalism to a higher stage of social evolution. The forces that could weld it into a national entity in the political sense, had not yet fully developed';[135] 'The extensive peninsula called Lidia, is a mere geographical expression'.[136] It is undoubtedly marked out from the mainland of Asia: 'But to hold that this geographical accident has been in itself sufficient to create a sense of national unity among the diverse communities inhabiting India, would be to misread the history of human evolution'.[137]

135 Ibid, p.300.
136 Ibid, p.294.
137 Ibid, p.294.

That history is traced by Roy in its essential outline as follows.[138]A nation, national consciousness, and the political institution of nation state, arise from economic forces. When a higher mode of production comes into existence, with it arises a new social class, the middle class, the bourgeoisie, whose one aim is to control the production, distribution and exchange of commodities. The idea of nationhood originates in this class, which consists of the proposition that the sovereign political power is vested not in an individual, in the theocratic and feudal monarch, but in the entire community united into a nation. 'Under the influence of this growing social class, the bourgeoisie, which controls the productive life of the community, the national state, distinct from its feudal predecessor is evolved. Economic relationships among the people united under such a state break down all racial, linguistic and cultural barriers; sectional isolation, prevailing hitherto, gives place to national cohesion'.[139]

He then applied this theory of the origin of national consciousness and nation-state to medieval Indian history. Neither the Hindu kingdoms nor the Muslim empire ever united the people of India into a nation. And that was because, Roy argues, 'the economic forces, which alone are capable of bringing about such a union, had not yet attained the adequate stage of development'.[140] He is willing to grant that there existed among the people of India 'a certain religious and cultural solidarity'. But that does not necessarily establish the presence of political nationhood. And 'it is with political nationhood that modem India is concerned, because political subjugation prevents the economic and social progress of a people. Political nationhood, and the struggle to attain a politically free national existence, in its turn, is conditional upon a certain grade of economic development in a

138 Ibid, see pp.293-301.
139 Ibid, pp.294-5.
140 Ibid, p.295.

particular people'.[141]

His argument was that the industrial economic development in the modem sense took place in India as a result of the British conquest, which gave rise to an Indian bourgeoisie, in whom originated under the impact of Western political ideas the perception of India as a nation, which gradually led to the struggle for political freedom. The Indian nationalist movement was thus bourgeois in origin and character. It represented, in Roy's perception, the aspirations and the goals only of that class, not of the exploited peasants and factory workers, whose economic condition was absolutely wretched. But the bourgeoisie can be revolutionary or reactionary. Having set up this distinction Roy proceeded to examine as to who, or which group, in the Indian National Congress, was bourgeois-revolutionary and who bourgeois-reactionary.

What is important here is not that assessment itself but the theoretical criteria on which it is based. Unfortunately, they keep shifting, like everything else in M.N. Roy's Marxist perception of Indian society. Bourgeois -revolutionary were those liberal intellectuals, 'assembled in the first sessions of the National Congress', who 'rebelled against two mighty forces, namely, those of social conservatism and religious superstition still dominating the Indian society, and the absolute political monopoly exercised by the foreign bourgeoisie'.[142] 'Historically they were revolutionaries': because 'By bravely condemning the old they voiced the judgment of history, and indicated that the forces of native reaction were more detrimental to popular progress than the political domination of a foreign bourgeoisie'.[143] They believed that British rule, firmly

141 Ibid, pp.295-6.
142 Ibid, p.319.
143 Ibid, p.319.

established 'on social foundations of higher order', would not be shaken until the people of India had been 'stirred up by progressive ideals'. 'By declaring their desire to struggle on against time-honoured customs and institutions, these men proved themselves to be the vanguard of a social revolution: they 'heralded the birth of a new India'.[144]

Roy looked upon Mahadev Govind Ranade as the most eminent among 'those spiritual pioneers of the rising progressive bourgeoisie'.[145] He regarded him as a man 'who worked with the firm conviction that the progress of the Indian people depended on a radical readjustment', 'whose personality stands as a landmark of the political renaissance of India'.[146] 'The patriotism of Ranade and his co-workers was revolutionary', according to Roy, 'in as much as it recognised the banefulness of the old religious corruptions and social customs and boldly declared war on thern'.[147] At the same time he regards Ranade's voice as 'the sanctimonious voice of a petty bourgeois moralist'.[148] Roy believes that 'The intricate social problems of India, with their roots struck deep in the traditions of the hoary past, could not be solved by the reformism of a moralist'.[149] However, when Ranade said that the Indians would not be fit to exercise political rights and privileges until they had brought about a 'social system based upon reason and justice', those 'were not hollow words' of a bourgeois intellectual. 'They were based upon an imperious force which would bring about in time a new society based upon a new code of ethics',[150] according to M.N. Roy.

144 Ibid, p.319.
145 Ibid, p.319.
146 Ibid, p.319.
147 Ibid, p.319.
148 Ibid, p.329.
149 Ibid, p.329.
150 Ibid, p.329.

But he does not tell us what that 'new code of ethics' would be. Neither does he tell us from what philosophical principles would the new ethics be derived. He simply says that 'The justice and reason of a bourgeois libertarian are the spiritual expressions of a rising social force, which breaks up the decayed and stifling old order and plunges society into a bitter struggle which exacts torrents of tears and rivers of blood. Patient suffering comes to an end, and the stagnation of the ignorant becomes a struggle of the awakened. This is a movement forward, and the radical nationalism of the Congress stood, though unconsciously, for this revolutionary forward movement. Consequently, it was a sworn enemy of the forces of reaction, still strong under the fostering care of the British government'.[151] And these revolutionary forces were crystallizing in the Congress under radical leaders, whose programme, M.N. Roy believes, 'was not to revive the India of the Rishis (patriarchal sages) with its contented handicraft workers saturated with ignorance and dosed in the name of religion, but to build a new society on the ruins of the old'.[152]

That revolutionary agenda had, however, one enemy-orthodox nationalism',or 'the political outburst of these dying forces of reaction''[153] as Roy described it. From his lengthy denunciation of orthodox nationalism, or 'aggressive nationalism', it would appear, though, that the enemy of the social revolution, whose vanguard the liberal intellectuals were, was in good robust health and was not dying at all. To Roy, 'its fundamental ideology was conceived by a young intellectual of petty-bourgeois origin. He was Narendra Nath Dutta, subsequently known by the religious nomenclature of Swami Vivekananda'.[154] To Roy, Vivekananda 'was the picturesque, and

151 Ibid, p.329.
152 Ibid, p.328.
153 Ibid, p.329.
154 Ibid, p.332.

tremendously vigorous embodiment of the old trying to readjust itself to the new'.[155] He does not dispute that Vivekananda 'was moved by the sufferings of the common people'. He acknowledges that Vivekananda 'decried scathingly orthodoxy in religion as well as in social customs': 'he was not a partisan of orthodoxy in religion: to social conservatism, he was a veritable iconoclast': indeed, he had insisted that 'spiritual knowledge must be democratised'.[156] Above all, Roy acknowledges, Vivekananda had 'discovered in the cult of Vedantism (religious Monism of the Hindus) a sort of socialistic, humanitarian religion'.[157] In that case, how could Roy maintain also that the 'fundamental ideology' of orthodox or aggressive nationalism was conceived by Vivekananda? Especially when, as Roy further acknowledges, Vivekananda had 'preached that Hinduism, not Indian nationalism, should be aggressive'.[158] Besides, there is nothing either in the speeches or in the writings or in the letters of Vivekananda to suggest even remotely that he had preached that Hinduism should be aggressive On the contrary.

Religious nationalism, according to Roy, had its 'political philosopher' in Arabinda Ghose, later Sri Aurobindo; its 'leader' in Bepin Chandra Pal; and its 'prophet' in Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Indian nationalism, he maintains, soon became, under the forces of reaction, Hindu nationalism. 'Orthodox nationalism was based upon aggressive Hinduism. The Extremist Party was born and developed as a Hindu Party. It was actuated by Hindu religion; its ideology was derived from Hindu philosophy'.[159] Aggressive nationalism must be self-sufflcient.

155 lbid, p.332.
156 Ibid, p.332.
157 lbid, p.332.
158 Ibid, p.332.
159 . lbid, p.357. This became a major argument for the demand of a separate Muslim homeland Pakistan. See K.K. Aziz, op.cit.

It must exclude the necessity of outside inspiration for its development. Therefore, the ideology of a modem political movement had to be drawn from the fountain of national philosophy. Complete national independence, which was its ideal, was to be more of a spiritual uplift than political progress .Arabinda Ghose, who adapted the teachings of Vivekananda to political purposes, said, 'Achievement of Swaraj (self-government) will develop Indian spirituality.' On another occasion he declared: 'British rule and Western civilization for which it stands, threaten the life of Hinduism.'[160]

According to M.N. Roy, 'Their tactics were to strengthen the nationalist movement by the questionable method of exploiting the ignorance of the masses. And the best way of exploiting the ignorance of the masses was to make a religion of nationalism'.[161] 'These tactics', he maintains, 'led to the appearance of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on the political horizon, and the temporary eclipse of all other politico-social tendencies in the shade of Gandhism'.[162] He asserts that 'In Gandhism culminates all the social tendencies that have always differentiated the two principles of Indian nationalism. In fact, Gandhism is the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction, trying to hold their own against the objectively revolutionary tendencies contained in the liberal bourgeois nationalism,[163]

Roy's criticism of Gandhi was based not on what Gandhi was saying but on the definitions which Roy had himself set up, which, as we shall see later,[164] were no less a caricature of Marx's philosophical

160 Ibid, p.334.
161 Ibid, p.344.
162 Ibid, p.344.
163 Ibid, p.344.
164 See below, p.259-60.

method and ethical concerns than were the positions Roy attributed to Gandhi. He does not state what Gandhi's social and political concerns were. He does not state Gandhi's understanding of social disorder, nor his principles of social reconstruction. He does not state Gandhi's attitude to private property, nor the relation which Gandhi's attitude to wealth has with the rest of his political philosophy. He does not place Gandhi's criticism of Western civilisation in the totality of his understanding of human life and freedom. Neither does he state the methods which Gandhi had proposed to resolve human conflicts, of which the economic and political domination of one society by another was only a part. Gandhi's voice is not heard in *India in Transition,* excepting two brief quotations, one from Gandhi's 'preface' to the third edition of *Hind Swaraj* and the other from the main text of it. What is heard is M.N. Roy's Marxist denunciation of Gandhi as the most evocative symbol of what he calls reactionary Hindu nationalism.

Hind Swaraj is dismissed as a 'sanctimonious philosophy of poverty'.[165] Gandhism is disposed of as 'nothing but petty-bourgeois humanitarianism hopelessly bewildered in the clashes of the staggering forces of human progress,.[166] To the Marxist, 'The crocodile tears of this humanitarianism are shed ostensibly for the undeniable sufferings of the majority in capitalist society, but they are really caused by grief over the end of the old order, already destroyed or about to be so,.[167] That old order, for which Gandhi is seen as pining, is stated to be 'that ancient golden age when the majority were kept in blissful ignorance in order that a few could roll in idle luxury, undisturbed by the revolt of the discontented, the spiritual culture of

165 Ibid, p.348.
166 Ibid, p.347.
167 Ibid, p.347.

which was based on the barbarism of the people at large, the simplicity of which was the sign of its backwardness'.[168]

What is at the very heart of M.N. Roy's Marxist understanding of India's transition from the backwardness of feudalism to the progress of modernity is his perception of the conflicts which that transition must of historical necessity generate.

Firstly, according to him, it is a conflict between the spirituality of Indian culture and the capitalist materialism of modern Western civilisation. Roy says: 'Gandhi's quarrel is not with the British government, but with 'Western civilization' which is satanic according to his estimation'.[169] Roy regards this opposition as senseless. 'In itself capitalist society has many defects; but it is undoubtedly an improvement on the patriarchal or feudal civilization for which Gandhi and his kind pine. Indian society is inevitably heading towards capitalist civilization, in spite of the premonitions of Gandhi, among many other prophets of similar creed'.[170] The Marxist argument is that 'Capitalist civilization is rotten; but it cannot be avoided. Neither is it permanent. It must pass away in due course of evolution, giving place to a higher order of society, as the ones preceding it were replaced by it. But it will not collapse because sentimental humanitarians find it full of cruelty and injustice. It will break down under the pressure of its own contradictions'.[171] Roy's suggestion is that 'Whether we want it or not, it must be lived through somehow', so that 'the fetters of moral and material ignorance that kept the human race bound hitherto can be broken, and mankind in all countries may have the facilities to strive for a higher stage of civilization'.[172]

168 Ibid, p.347.
169 Ibid, p.348.
170 Ibid, p.349.
171 Ibid, p.349.
172 Ibid, p.349.

In this conflict between the two civilisations the Indian Marxist must stand on the side of Western materialism and its capitalist phase. That is because, to Roy, Western civilisation 'is after all only a certain stage of social development through which every human community has to pass'.[173] In other words, the Marxist prescription of M.N. Roy is that the social and economic order of the West, with its materialise foundation, turned into socialism, shall be a universal order for the rest of the world. It shall be so, because the materialistic law of history has determined it to be so.

Secondly, it was a conflict, according to Roy, between the new social class, the Indian bourgeoisie, and the British bourgeoisie on the one hand; and between the two groups of the Indian bourgeoisie themselves, on the other hand. His analysis of this conflict occupies the largest part not only of *India in Transition* but of his other writings on India during his Marxist days. But it is also the most confused. Its central argument, however, is as follows.

a. The British conquest of India created, on the ruins of Indian feudalism, a new middle class, which was for a long time denied any share in the exploitation of Indian resources through machine - industry. After the events of 1857, the British corrected this mistake and co-opted the Indian bourgeoisie as a subordinate and junior partner in the imperialistic exploitation of Indian wealth. Policies and laws were slightly modified towards that purpose. But a junior partnership was far too little to satisfy the rising aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie, which now demanded a greater share. Hence the increasing demand for constitutional and financial reforms. Those demands were made in the name of Western civilisation and its political thought. The conflict with the British arose because the reforms were dreadfully slow and also of no great economic

173 Ibid, p.346.

consequence. The Indian middle class was impatient to acquire its share of the means of production. The reformers, the Moderates, were seen as politically impotent. A more aggressive attitude towards British rule was considered necessary.

b. That was provided by the orthodox group of the Indian bourgeoisie, which demanded not just reforms but complete political independence from British rule. That they did in the name of Hindu civilisation and its spiritual mission. The conflict between the Moderates and the Extremists consisted in the progressive outlook of the one and the backward-looking mentality of the other. The social and constitutional reformers, though bourgeois in origin, were genuine revolutionaries: because they had adopted the social and political principles of a progressive civilisation. The Extremists, Likewise bourgeois in origin, but with their aggressive nationalism, were religious reactionaries, wanting to keep India in the backward mentality of the Veda and the purana. But this movement of Hindu nationalism was 'doomed to death by the imperious verdict of history'.[174]

c. Nevertheless, its bitter hostility to modem civilisation enabled it to be more uncompromising to British rule, and therefore to take up the fight and carry it on further than the point at which the moderates deserted it. This was the social reason which explains how the Indian national movement in its most revolutionary period, could be actuated by such a reactionary philosophy as Gandhisrn'.[175] The contradiction in the orthodox nationalism, as expressed in Gandhism, lies in this: 'It endeavours to utilize the mass energy for the perpetuation or revival of that heritage of national culture which has been made untenable by the awakening of this energy'.[176] Because the 'present awakening is a reaction

174 Ibid, p.351
175 Ibid, pp.351-2.
176 Ibid, p.345.

against the age-long resignation, created by religious teachings and the tenets of spiritual culture', 'it cannot be used for a national movement tending towards the revival of the spiritual civilization of India'.[177]

d. After saying all this, M.N. Roy turns around; and, in equally categorical terms, now attributes the failure of the Moderates, his 'objective revolutionaries', to the fact, one, that their 'new nationalism was not founded on the old traditions nor on the cultural unity of the Indian people';[178] and, two, that "They believed more in English political ethics than in the social and cultural teachings of their forefathers. Their cult was not of nationalism, but of representative government'.[179] Indeed, he points to the irony of the whole situation in that those who had 'assumed the role of popular representatives' were in actual fact those 'who were as much divorced from the national life and tradition, culturally and ideologically, as the English rulers themselves'.[180]

Thirdly, there arose a conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims. On the question as to why that conflict arose and its nature, M.N. Roy takes conflicting positions once again. In one part of his Marxist analysis, he advances the thesis that the conflict was not religious; in the other part, that it was a product of aggressive Hindu nationalism, rooted in Hindu religion, of which the Muslims would naturally not consider themselves any part whatsoever.[181] However, his main thesis is that 'As soon as both communities came to have identical material interests, their union in a political movement could no longer be

177 Ibid, p.345
178 Ibid, p.312.
179 Ibid, p.313.
180 Ibid, p.313.
181 Ibid, p.357.

prevented by the cleverest artifices of the government, nor by the traditional religious antagonism'.[182] The conflict was not between the masses of the two communities, the exploited lower class, but between the rich propertied classes of the Hindus and the Muslims, the exploiting upper class. It was the latter that stirred up religious differences and turned them into social conflicts.

a. Roy perceived the problem as created, moreover, by the feudal tendencies of the Muslim intellectuals, the Aligarh alumni, and the progressive outlook of the Hindu bourgeois intellectuals. 'Elements so diverse socially could not unite in a national movement'.[183] In other words, the 'absence of a class-cohesion was responsible for the political divergence between the Hindus and the Moslems'.[184] Above all, there was the Muslim suspicion of the rising demand for representative government 'whose success, even partial, would mean a Hindu supremacy in Indian politics. And in those days, to the Moslem upper class of feudal origin, Hindu domination was by no means a better prospect than British rule'.[185]

b. Rather the Muslim support for British rule 'originated in the belief that British rule would provide a protection for the social order and religious institutions they desired to preserve, and which, they apprehended, would be endangered if the Hindu liberals were to be given their way. This apprehension was corroborated by the growth of orthodox nationalism, which was bigotedly Hindu'.[186]

In M.N. Roy's Marxist perception the ultimate conflict in modem India, as everywhere else in the world, is the class-conflict. People everywhere are divided into two antagonistic classes, those who own

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182 Ibid, p.358.
183 Ibid, p.359.
184 Ibid, p.359.
185 Ibid, p.359.
186 Ibid, p.360.

the means of production and do not themselves labour and those who labour and toil but have no control over the means of production. 'The former thrives on the exploitation of the latter, therefore the interest of the one cannot be the interest of the other'.[187] In *What Do We Want* he posits an irreconcilable conflict between *they* and *we.* They are the privileged class who, when the foreign ruler is driven out, will take its place as the exploiter: the capitalist, the landlord, the trader, the rentier. We are the toiling masses of India, the peasants and the workers. 'Both may unite temporarily to fight together against a common enemy, but this union can never be permanent, because each is struggling for a different goal-neither is actuated by the same motives; *each wants liberty, but the liberty of their respective class'.*[188] True *swaraj* is not simply political freedom from British rule; it is social and economic freedom equally from native exploitation.

In *What Do We Want Roy* lays down in concrete details the Marxist policy agenda for independent India. Its essence is: *'to abolish the source of human exploitation,, which lies in the system of private property, or production for profit, in a word, Capitalism'.*[189] Every other Marxist policy, concerning the agrarian, industrial, and social relations in Indian society, is derived from this fundamental goal.

He adds, however, that this need not be, indeed ought not to be, the one immediate policy of independent India, although without question it should be the ultimate policy. He makes this concession only in so far as the private ownership of land is concerned. Its justification is that because 'Individualism is the main trait of the peasant's character'; he 'hugs to his bosom the small plot of land which he possesses or imagines he possesses, and which is all that stands between him and

187 *What Do We Want, p.529.*
188 Ibid, *p.529.*
189 Ibid, *p.530.*

starvation. His first instinct is to own the land which he tills'[190] Roy acknowledges that this psychology 'cannot be killed in a day. To work against it would be disastrous'. Therefore, in respect of the peasant, *'The first act of the revolution must be to put him in possession of the land which he cultivates, whose final ownership should be declared vested in the state'.*[191] *A* similar concession is made in regard even to the ownership of industry. For in view of 'the industrial backwardness of our country, it may be necessary to advance gradually' towards the goal of abolishing private capitalism altogether. The policy which Roy advocates, for the time being at any rate, is 'a certain degree of supervision and restraint over capitalist ownership of industries', which shall be exercised by the workers in the factory.

These concessions in the Marxist policy are advocated by Roy not really as concessions to the sentiment of the peasant or to his psychology, or as a temporary reward to the private capitalist for developing some industry at least, but owing to the demand of the theory of historical stages of economic development. There has to be private ownership in land before it can be taken away; there has to be fully-developed private capitalism before it can be superseded by scientific socialism. It has never been clarified as to why should dialectical materialism play this strange historical game, especially when the end of history, in Marxian teleology, consists in the superseding even of socialism and communism and the withering away of the State. But we need not go into that here, beyond observing that when Gandhi proposed that class conflict *could* be resolved on an entirely different basis, without recourse to the theory of historical materialism, and the violence it entails, he was dismissed

190 Ibid, p.520.
191 Ibid, p.521.

as a bourgeois-reactionary, not because what he had proposed was inherently improbable, or irrational, but solely because what he was saying did not fit into the Marxian dogma of history and its assumed rationality.

M.N. Roy perceived Indian tradition as the greatest obstruction to freedom from exploitation. And he decided that the characteristic feature of that tradition was a glorification of spirituality and its attendant admiration for poverty. That had to be repudiated first.'The abstraction of a golden age under the aegis of a spiritual swaraj cannot for any length of time allure the pauperized masses fighting for a full meal or a piece of cloth. You cannot lead people into the battle in order to conquer the right of material progress by dinning in their weary ears the virtues of poverty and the philosophy of sacrifice.If poverty and simple living were the highest virtues, then who deserve more the Kingdom of Heaven than the Indian people? ' [192]

'The first thing we have to fight and overcome', Roy therefore proposed, 'is this spirit of resignation and submission engendered by superstition and ignorance'.[193] 'This ignorance and passivity of the masses has always been fomented by the upper classes and maintained by every means within their power, chief among which has been the preaching of religions that teach resignation to our earthly lot as the will of God'.[194] The Marxist agenda ought to be to 'teach the masses that the philosophy of poverty is conducive to the interests of the idle rich, because it keeps the people docile and harmless. This spirit of docility and resignation does not make for freedom; so long as the Indian people remain victims of this pernicious doctrine, even the

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192 'Our object', in *The Vanguard of Indian Independence,* dated 15 May 1922; at *Selected Works, Vol 1,* p.383. 2. *What Do We Want,* p.528.
193 *What Do We Want,* p.528.
194 Ibid, p.528.

political liberation of our country cannot be realized'.[195]

In M.N. Roy's perception the fundamental issue in Indian society between the exploiting few and the exploited masses is thus also the issue between the spiritualism of the Indian world-view and the materialism of the Western. These two issues are intimately connected with each other. This has generally been the position of the Indian Marxists.

What do the vast majority of the Indian people need? He answers this question by saying that what the common people need is an improvement of their material condition, which is also 'the real motive-force of the national movement'.[196] He advances the Marxist thesis that in the scale of material civilisation the people of India had lagged behind, while the European peoples had made great progress in political, social, economic and cultural fields. 'Not to recognise this historical fact and to sublimate this backwardness by clothing it in the glorious garb of a 'spiritual' civilization is the effort of reactionary forces'.[197] That is because, in his view, the people who represent them, like Tilak and Gandhi and Aurobindo, refuse to learn anything from others and hug the old traditions.

More importantly, in his understanding of human history, 'The ideals of bourgeois society and the doctrines of a democratic state, which are the foundation of the material civilization of the modem world, happened first to be evolved by the European peoplesl.[198] His thesis is that because 'these are not the outcome of a particular European civilization, but are realized by every human community at a particular stage of economic progress'; 'India would have evolved political and social ideals of a similar nature', if a foreign conquest

195 Ibid, p.529.
196 *The Vanguard,* 15 September 1922; *at Selected Works, Vol. 1,* p.428
197 *India in Transition,* p.320
198 Ibid, p.320.

had not intervened.[199] 'Foreign domination had been harmful to the ' Indian people, chiefly because it prevented their development and deprived them of the full benefit of these modern thoughts and institutions'.[200] But in the same work, *India in Transition,* he had throughout advanced the thesis that it was British rule, 'that advanced social force', which had brought about India's passage, through English education and modem capitalist industry, from the barbarism of its traditional life to the civilisation of the modem West. What is, however, important here is his conclusion that 'if the foreigner could continue to dominate over India, it was because there did not exist in her population an element which tended to break down the old, in order to build a new social and political structure'.[201]

The new order in India will be raised on the foundation of Western civilisation. The British missionaries, the imperialists, the liberals, the utilitarians, and the Indian Marxists, all of them had this agenda in common. 1hey differed from each other radically only as regards their respective ultimate aims for India.

'We want to end foreign exploitation of the Indian masses in order to better their economic condition. This is our immediate goal', Roy declared; 'Our ultimate goal is the end of all exploitation. We want to break the age-long social slavery of all those who live by labour, who create all wealth'. Since, the system of private property is the source of all exploitation, the ultimate Marxist aim for India 'is a complete *social* revolution, which means *the abolition of private ownership in the means of production, distribution and exchange.* Only thus will the real freedom of the Indian people be achieved'.[202]

This ultimate Marxist aim is based on a philosophical foundation,

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199 Ibid, p.320.
200 Ibid, p.320.
201 Ibid, p.320.
202 Ibid, p.526.

Roy claimed, and has a universal law as its guiding force. 'We believe in the Law of Economic Determinism. Our movement for national liberation is also subject to this law'.[203] It is in the same measure as the labouring masses of India will become conscious of the underlying economic motive of all social relations that they will create for themselves, and for Indian society, the true freedom.

This is the essence of M.N. Roy's Marxist perception of India.

ix) (b) D.D. Kosambi (1907-66)

'Economic determinism will not do. It is not inevitable, nor even true, that a given amount of wealth will lead to a given type of development. The complete historical process through which the social form has been reached is also of prime importance'.[204] This was the voice of another Marxist: Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi.

Kosambi was not a professional historian, was a mathematician, but he made a profound and a very lively contribution to the study of ancient Indian history. He was not an official Marxist either, but he laid the foundation of the Marxist interpretation of Indian culture and civilisation. He was born at Kosben, in Goa, in July 1907. His father, Dharmanand Kosambi, was a renowned Buddhist scholar. After an education at Harvard University, Damodar Kosambi taught mathematics for many years at the Fergusson College, and later moved to the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, in Bombay.

Since he continued to live in Pune he would every morning take the 'Deccan Queen' to Bombay, and back to Pune. Daniel H.H. Ingalls, who had worked with Kosambi on an annotated edition of Vidyakara's *Subhasitaratnakosa,* tells us about his friend how he

203 *The Vanguard; 15* September 1922; at *Selected Works,* p.409.
204 D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (Delhi; Vikas Publications, 1970), hereafter *Ancient India;* p. 12.

invited him to travel with him to Bombay on the 'Deccan Queen'.[205] the American capitalist, had never travelled in India by other than second class fare. My Marxist friend insisted that I join him in his first class compartment'. *1* Kosambi dedicated his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* to Monica Felton, that remarkable Englishwoman, who coming under the influence of Chakravard Rajagopalachari, had drifted away from her Marxist moorings, and had made Madras her home. Ingalls, again, tells us: 'D.D. Kosambi always expressed an intense admiration of his father. He felt that his father had been mistaken in the goal of quietism that he chose; the son chose a far different goal. But the passion for the search and the scorn of non-searchers were common to both men,[206]

Damodar Kosambi's search for the true nature of Indian civilisation, and its meaning for the Indian society of today, had, as with M.N. Roy, historical materialism as its chief method. But, unlike Roy, he insisted that the Marxist method of understanding has 'to be very far from a mechanical determinism, particularly in dealing with India'.[207] To Kosambi, 'Marxism is far from the economic determinism which its opponents so often take it to be'.[208] But that is what Marxism was taken to be, even in Marx's lifetime, by its adherents no less than by its opponents. Later, Engels (1820-95) complained that he and Marx were misunderstood as saying that economic causes are *alone* important and that everything can be mechanically explained in their terms. Kosambi takes care to clarify, which Roy did not, that 'Ideas (including superstition) become a force, once they have gripped the masses; they supply the forms in which men become conscious of

205 op.cit., p.27.
206 op.cit., p.21.
207 *Ancient India, p. 12.*
208 D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to Indian History* (Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1956), hereafter *Indian History; p. 10.*

having fulfilled his task unless he shows why, how, and when the grip was secured. The adoption of Marx's thesis does not mean blind repetition of all his conclusions (and even less, those of the official, party-line Marxists) at all times'.[209]

What is central to this review of the Marxist perceptions of India is not the truth or falsehood of particular conclusions but the Marxist method which leads to them. That method revolves around the Marxian concept of history. Marxism, like Christianity, is first and foremost a view of history, in whose light the human condition is sought to be understood-and changed. The Western category of history had constituted from the very beginning one of the real but unperceived grounds of the Western encounter with Indian civilisation.For Indian thought had a radically different understanding of history and human life.

Kosambi rejected as misleading not only Marx's ill-informed view of the self-sufficient village communities of India forming the basis of passive, unchanging and backward Indian society-Marx's 'Asiatic society'-but also Marx's famous pronouncement that 'Indian society has no history, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empire on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society'; that is, village society. On the contrary, Kosambi points out, 'the greatest periods of Indian history, the Mauryan, Satavahana, Gupta owed nothing to intruders; they mark precisely the formation and spread of the basic village society, or the development of new trade centres'.[210]

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209 Ibid, p. 10.
210 Ibid, p. 11.

The main point, however, is not whether Marx wrongly perceived the Indian village society;[211] nor that his sources of information were necessarily British, and therefore biased; nor even whether his conclusions as regards India were tentative or final. The main point is that Western civilisation is rooted in arbitrary definitions, from which everything is accordingly perceived. The Marxian definition of history is one such. Given that, India would be perceived, debated, and sought to be changed by the Indian Marxists only in that light.

Kosambi adopted the following definition: *'History is the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production'.*[212] In this he had modified the Marxian definition of history. To Marx, 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles', the very first statement of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* January 1848. Kosambi, in his main historical works, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (1956)* and *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India (1965),* the second of the two being incomparably more coherent and clearer a work, does speak of the classes existing in ancient Indian society, but not of the class struggles. This means that Kosambi is at least one Marxist who does not force Indian history somehow into the Marxian mould. Rather, he shows how 'The state developed a new function after Asoka, the reconciliation of classes. This had never been visualised by the *Arthasastra,* and indeed the classes of society grew within the pores as it were of the Magadhan state policy of extensive land clearing, land settlement, and severely regulated trade. The special tool for this conciliatory action was precisely the universal

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211 For an enthusiastic support of Marx's understanding of Indian village society, as indeed of everything that Marx said about India, see Irfan Habib's extended essay, *'Marx's Perceptions of India',* on the occasion of Marx's death centenary, 14 March 1983, published by Schriften aus dern Karl-Haus, Trier.
212 *Ancient India,* p. 10, and also *Indian History, p. 1*

dharma in a new sense. King and citizen found common meeting ground in freshly developed religion. This may not seem today to have been the best solution, but it was immediately effective. It can even be said that.[213] the Indian national character received the stamp of *dharma* from the time of Asoka'

Although Kosambi had rejected Marx's perception of India having no history, no known history at any rate, he seemed to have agreed with the nineteenth-century English Utilitarians that the Indians had no *sense* of history. Kosambi advanced the thesis that history in India was 'erased' by 'the brahmin indifference to past and present reality'.[214] He asserts that, *one,* 'The brahmin never troubled to record and publish the caste laws he defended. The basis for a broad, general common, law on the principles of equality or like the Roman ius *gentium* was lost; crime and sin stand hopelessly confused'.[215] Two, 'The various guild and city records that existed through the Middle Ages were never thought worthy of study and analysis. Indian culture lost the contributions that these numerous groups (tribal, clan, jati caste, guild, and perhaps civic) could have made'.[216] And, *three,* 'The civilising and socialising work of the Buddha and of Asoka was never continued. The tightening of caste bonds and of caste exclusiveness threw away the possibility of finding some common denominator of justice and equity for all men regardless of class, profession, caste, and creed'.[217]

All these propositions in the unrestrained form in which they are expressed are false. But assuming each one of them to be true, it still does not follow, as concluded by Kosambi, that 'As a concomitant,

213 *Ancient India, p.* 165.
214 Ibid, p.174.
215 Ibid, p.173.
216 Ibid, p.173.
217 Ibid, p.173.

almost all Indian history is also obliterated'. Quite apart from the absurdity of words like 'erased' and 'obliterated' in this connexion, Kosambi's views mentioned above are even plainly inconsistent with his own well-known thesis that one has only to step out of one's door to see, with some training, different layers of Indian history all around.

Kosambi's abiding contribution to the study of Indian civilisation consists in his method, which is that of asking the question: why? It is this question which is mostly absent in the historical studies of Indian society by the Western and Indian scholars alike. Why does a new religion arise at the time it does? Who are the people who support it and why? Why does a new social formation arise? Why does an earlier social institution survive even in the conditions in which it should disappear? The answers to these questions are in many ways linked with other questions. 'What was the role of caste in breaking up tribal groups to annex them to society? Where did the metals come from? When did commodity-exchange crops like the coconut become important; what relation did they have to communal and private landholdings? Why have we no large-scale chattel slavery in the classical period, no proper serfdom in the feudal? What is the reason for the survival of mesolithic rites, the continued worship of stone-age gods even today among all classes? These questions have at least to be raised their answers worked out as far as possible'.[218] Dynastic changes of importance, vast religious upheavals', according to Kosambi, 'are generally indicative of powerful changes in the productive

218 *Indian History, p. 13.* See also Kosambi's 'What constitutes Indian History?', being his review of the first three volumes of *The History and Culture of the Indian People,* ed. R.C. Majurndar & A.D. Pusalkar (Bombay, Bharatlya, Vidya Bhavan), *in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. XM* (Poona 1954-55), pp. 194-201, and reproduced at *D.D. Kosambi on History and Society* (University of Bombay, 1985; ed. A.J. Syed), p.67.

basis, hence must be studied as such, not dismissed as senseless flickers on the surface of an unchanging substratum'.[219]

Kosambi's method is undoubtedly a step forward to understanding better India's past; and, if applied intelligently, will provide, too, a clearer vision of the forces that are moving India today. The questions Kosambi asks are, however, not the only important questions that should be asked in order to reach a truer understanding of the Indian vision of human order. Neither is the theoretical framework in which he raises his questions, that of dialectical materialism, the only productive framework. What is required as the very first step towards understanding the Indian view of human relationships is to ask: what were the questions concerning human life which were asked in Indian civilisation itself at different times of its history? Kosambi does not do that. The result is that whereas those questions, demonstrably, are questions also concerning the material basis of human life; it is made out, wrongly, that they are questions about man's spiritual destiny alone. This is a characteristic feature of the Marxist perception of India.

Kosambi's method, of showing the relation between social and religious developments and the changes in the means of production, does throw light on certain areas of Indian history. For example, he traces the decline of Buddhism to the vast accumulation of metal icons, besides silver and gold, in the Buddhist monasteries, causing an economic drain. They had become places of substantial wealth which was mostly locked up. But 'the immense amount of precious metal, brass, and bronze locked up in the monasteries was badly needed for currency, utensils and tools. Even the Chinese emperors had ultimately to issue decrees forbidding the use of metal for images in the Buddhist temples and monasteries. In India the necessary

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219 *Indian History, p. 13.*

economic measures often appeared with theological trappings, as a change in religion'.[220] If 'the monasteries had to go', it was because of economic reasons. 'The economic root cause of such changes', Kosambi argues, is clearly shown in the merciless sack of the Buddhist monasteries by King Harsha of Kashmir (1089-1101).He 'systematically melted down all metal images throughout the length and the breadth of his kingdom, with just four exceptions. The work was carried out under a special 'minister for uprooting gods' *(devotpatana-nayaka)'.*[221] Not the slightest theological excuse was offered': 'The metal was needed to finance the king's desperate and expensive wars against rebellious Damara barons'.[222]

But neither the theory nor the method of dialectical materialism is required to show this particular connexion between the unproductive hoarding of wealth in the Buddhist monasteries and the decline of Buddhism. It can be explained as much by a more straightforward theory, advanced by the *Mahabharata* repeatedly, that accumulation of wealth, without putting it to productive use, must invite disorder.

In order to demonstrate how the Indian misconceptions of India arose from a careless adoption of Western definitions, Marxist or liberal, it is necessary to have a look at Kosambi's thesis that the social functions of *bhakti* consisted in strengthening feudalism. In his view, the *Bhagavadgita* arises at a certain stage of economic development. It was 'a logical performance for the early Gupta period, when expanding village settlement brought in new wealth to a powerful central goverrunent'.[223]

To him the remarkable feature of the *Gita* is that 'No violence is done to any preceding doctrine except vedic *yajnna.* The essential is

220 *Ancient India, p. 186.*
221 Ibid, p. 186.
222 Ibid, p. 186.
223 *Myth and Reality* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1962), p-29.

taken from each by a remarkably keen mind capable of deep and sympathetic study; all are fitted together with consummate skill and literary ability, and cemented by *bhakti* without developing their inner contradictions'.[224] But its method of synthesis, which worked in the early Gupta period due to its economic affluence and prosperity, did not work in the following centuries because of the deepening economic crisis. Tolerance and fusion are possible 'when the crisis in the means of production is not too acute', but become 'IMPOSSIBLE WHEN THE CRISIS DEEPENS, VMEN THERE IS NOT ENOUGH OF THE SWLUS PRODUCT TO GO AROUND, AND THE SYNTHETIC METHOD WES NOT LEAD TO INCREASED PRODUCTION'.[225]

Nevertheless, *bhakti,* the one way of deriving all views from a single divine source, was also the one innovation of the *Bhagavadgita* that suited the needs of a later period, according to Kosambi. The end of the great centralised personal empires in sight, 'the new state had to be feudal from top to bottom'. 'The essence of fully developed feudalism is the chain of personal loyalty which binds retainer to chief, tenant to lord, and baron to king or emperor. Not loyalty in the abstract but with a secure foundation in the means and relations of production: land ownership, military service, tax-collection and the conversion of local produce into commodities through the magnates'.[226] Such feudal loyalty was provided by the doctrine of *bhakti.* In brief, *'bhakti* was the basic need in feudal ideology'.[227]

In the light of all the available evidence, Kosambi's theory outlined above will seem to be nothing but a conjecture.

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224 lbid, p.28-9.
225 lbid, p.31. (This is how these lines are printed in the quoted work.)
226 Ibid, p.3 1.
227 Ibid, p.32.

According to Ram Sharan Sharma, another Marxist historian, feudalism can be seen either 'merely as political disintegration and administrative decentralisation brought about by chiefs and vassals' or gas a form of social disorder in which the possessing class appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants by exercising superior rights over their land and persons'.[228] Kosambi's own understanding of feudalism tends towards the latter, even though the first of the two meanings is not ruled out.[229] Now what is the period of feudalism in the second sense? Sharma has established that 'the main traits of the feudal formations appear in India between the sixth and the twelfth centuries'.[230] It is established that there was no feudalism in India before the beginning of the Gupta empire in the fourth century A.D.

And in what period can it be said that the *Bhagvadgita* was composed? Kosambi assigns this work a date nearer 350 A.D. He does so on the grounds *(a)* that many of its ideas are Buddhistic, and (b) that its high classical Sanskrit could not have been possible before the Gupta period.[231] The question as regards the probable date of the *Bhagvadgita* had been discussed long before Kosambi; and in that connection, particularly *'(a)'.* The probability of Buddhist influence in the *Bhagvadgita* was discounted, in view of the evidence to the contrary, first by Bhandarkar[232] and then by Surendranath Dasgupta.[233]

228 Ram Sharan Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* (Delhi, Macmillan, 1965), p.224.
229 See, for example, *Indian History,* pp.326-8.
230 op.cit., p.223.
231 *Myth and Reality,* p.16.
232 R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Strassburg, 1913; reprint 1928, Poona), pp. 17-8, 34-42.
233 Surendranath Dasgupta, A *History of Indian Philosophy*(Cambridge University Press), hereafter HIP; Vol. H (1952), pp.534, 545-52.

Bhandarkar came to the conclusion that the *Bhagavadgita* was written not later than the beginning of the fourth century B.C., how much earlier it was difficult to say.[234] After examining its sources, he concluded: 'Thus the Bhagavadgita is the result of development of religious and philosophical speculation that prevailed before the rise of Buddhism'.[235] Dasgupta, after examining all the current theories as to its tine, showed it to be decidedly a pre-Buddhist work.[236] Nothing has come up subsequently to upset that conclusion. And as to the language of the *Bhagavadgita,* far from being 'high classical Sanskrit', as Kosambi asserts it to be, it was 'archaic and un-Paninean', as Dasgupta demonstrates.[237]

Even assuming that the *Bhagavadgita* was composed sometime around 350 A.D., how was it 'a logical performance' or that period, as Kosambi contends? There is not the slightest evidence, logical or historical, to show that: one, the doctrines of the *Bhagvadgita* were manufactured by the beneficiaries of the Gupta land-grants; and two, that that was done with the sole aim of perpetuating their feudal privileges. His thesis here is that philosophic synthesis of conflicting ideas can take place only when there is economic prosperity; which there was in the Gupta period; and hence the *Gita.* But Kosambi had begun by saying that 'It is not inevitable, nor even true, that a given amount of wealth will lead to a given type of development'. He once again liquidates his thesis of the *Gita* being a logical product of the Gupta period, by saying, in the same place, that 'the *Gita* was possible only in a period when it was not absolutely necessary, .[238]

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234 *op.cit, p.18.*
235 *op.cit,* p.39.
236 *HIP, 11,* pp.549-52.
237 *HIP, II,* pp.55 1-2.
238 *Myth and Reality,* p.3 *1.*

All the known facts about the society in which *bhakti* developed, and came to occupy a prominent place, however susceptible they might be to other conclusions, at least show Kosambi's theory to be untenable. It is one thing to say that, detached from its proper context, *bhakti* was used to strengthen the loyalty of the peasant to the landlord, or of a noble to the king. But it is entirely a different thing to say that that was the main function of *bhakti.* It is the second contention which is wrong.

This becomes clearer in view of the fact, mentioned by Kosambi himself, that the large number of bhakti-saints were in evident opposition to brahmanical orthodoxy. Talking of Jnanesvara, Ekanath, and Tukaram, Kosambi says: 'These men represent a general movement by no means confined to their province and language. The generally painful tenor of their lives shows that they were in opposition', and did not care to exercise the meretricious art of pleasing those in power-quite unlike the brahmins, who did not scorn to develop the cult of these saints whenever it paid, but always pandered to the rich'.[239] What the *bhakti-saints preached* and did was, indeed, the very denial of feudal mentality.

Almost all the *bhakti-saints* had rejected brahmanical ritualism. They rejected the distinction of caste and social position as of any value in themselves. They rejected the pride of learning. They addressed themselves directly to the masses in the language which the masses spoke. They preached love in the place of knowledge, and treated all men as children of God. They challenged the authority of priests and did not regard them as necessarily holy. In brief, the entire bhakti movement was a conscious opposition to all forms of oppression.

The truth about bh*akti* is neither that it had brought about religious revolution, 'the greatest religious revolution that India has ever seen

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239 *Myth and Reality, p.34.*

greater even than that of Buddhism', a view propagated by George A. Grierson;[240] nor that it was an ideological product of feudalism. Nor was it a natural ground on which Christianity in India could be raised, as several missionaries came to believe, a belief that was very nearly abandoned later.

All these positions have obscured the ironies with which the *bhakti* movements were surrounded. Their rejection of caste as any barrier to God, not only did not remove caste as a social barrier between man and man, but many of them added to the already large number of castes and sub-castes a few more-by turning themselves into new castes. Love of God, far from removing the bitterness of philosophical disputes, produced the greater bitterness of sectarian disputes. Monotheism has been one great single factor in dividing Indian society into numerous warring sects. The theistic philosophies not only did not succeed in their project of finding for theistic beliefs philosophical certainty, they soon undermined the philosophical temper itself. The Vallablia sect, moreover, took a sexual-orgiastic turn, which was a pathology of *bhakti* even in its own terms.

But what the Western frameworks of inquiry, like Kosambi's Marxism, obscure, most of all, is the perpetual struggle in the history of Indian civilisation between the undeniable relativity of knowledge and truth and the emotional human demand for certainty. It is not until we understand the forms in which that struggle expressed itself, of which *bhakti* was certainly the most dominant, that we can understand Indian life and its conflicting strands.

To see this more fully, we have to take into account the five main aspects of the history of theism in India. They are: (i) the compromises through which monotheism was established in an environment

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240 *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.II,* article Thakti-Marg' by Grierson, p.548; hereafter *ERE.*

where the philosophical world view was non-theistic, even atheistic, was hospitable to polytheism, and where the pantheism of the early Upanisad had claimed most serious attention; (ii) the complex relation between theistic philosophies and theistic practices; (iii) the tension between *bhakti* and caste order; (0) the tension between the sexual orgiastic turn that *bhakti* took and the insistence on chastity as the crown of *bhakti;* and (v) the guru as the ultimate point of theistic absolutism.

Underlying them all was the emotional quest for ultimate truth, which was not relative to the changing conditions of time and place, but was absolute. The Indian mind found in the realm of *bhakti* the satisfaction of that demand. Indian theism was a complete reversal not only of the non-theistic temper of most of Indian philosophy, but also of its relativism. It discovered *in bhakti,* in the adoration of God, 'the Good' that was free from doubt. The person of the guru became a tangible symbol of certainty. The fierce conflicts within Indian civilisation, and the intricate compromises that neutralised them, are nowhere more evident than in the history of theism. In that history, more than in any other, hatred and strife among sects are manifest as prominently as a thematic unity of emotional approach to God and to all men. Also that history is full of ironies, some of them mentioned above, which are as fascinating as they are tragic. It is to them that many of the involutions of Indian life can be traced. Certainty, like ecstasy, is what the Dharmic man has sought most, despite his awareness that certainty in knowledge is nowhere to be obtained.

The main concern of the *Bhagavadgita* is to resolve that conflict. Whether it achieved a genuine resolution of that conflict, or it did not, are important questions. What is perfectly clear, in any event, is that Kosambi fails to show an indisputable connection between what he calls 'feudalism from above', a characteristic of the Gupta age, and the questions, epistemological and ethical, with which the *Bhagavadgita*

is concerned. His project was to establish that the one determined the other. He offered no proof that it did.

Kosambi had rightly insisted, unlike M.N. Roy and other Marxists that economic determinism would not do. He had begun by pointing out that it is neither inevitable nor true that a certain amount of wealth would lead to a given type of development. And he had spoken of the complete historical process as of prime importance. But in his works there is little evidence of his own principle of the complete historical process, which simply must include an account of what the concerns of the civilisation one is studying were. His main thesis remains, after all, in the framework of economic determinism, in which the rise and decline of religions, philosophical beliefs, literature, sculpture, music, are traced only to economic factors as their root causes a framework of inquiry which he had rejected as inadequate.

Finally, in the works of a historian who traces all social developments to economic causes, there is the astonishing absence of the very question that he should have then asked at the beginning of his inquiry into Indian civilisation: what was the Indian thinking as regards wealth?

(ix) (c) Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, the Marxist philosopher, concerned with Indian philosophy and its materialist trends, does not ask that question either. There is not a single Indian Marxist, historian, or economist, or sociologist, or philosopher, who investigates in the first place, as his own approach to history demands that he should, the Indian view of the material conditions of life and their intricate relation to the other attributes of man., That inquiry has always been inseparable from the Indian inquiry into the human condition.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya has on the other hand a policy agenda which seems to determine his opinions as to what is living and what is dead in Indian philosophy. 'For, the need to retain what is valuable in

our philosophical heritage is as pressing as to reject what is not', he says: 'The reason is that the philosophical ideas of the past are not just curios for us. These may help or hinder our present progress. Among the stock of our ancestral ideas, therefore, those that go against the requirements of our present progress are in need of being critically surrendered while those that still retain significance for the building up of our desired future are in need of special emphasis'.[241]

For him the future lies in 'a planned economic development of the country': 'we have urgent tasks ahead of us, tasks that presuppose a better mastery of nature and therefore also a clearer insight into it and its laws'.[242] That being the goal, he advocates that among the traditional Indian ideas 'it is necessary to nourish those that are helpful for the cultivation of science; it is equally necessary to scrap those that prove inimical to science.[243] 'We cannot expect', for instance. 'our peasants to be genuinely enthusiastic about the land reforms and the advanced agricultural technology offered to them without at the same time weeding out from their heads the law of *karma,* which for generations taught them that their miserable lot was the result of their misdeeds in the previous births rather than because of a backward technology and an equally backward social setup which we call feudalism.[244]

Debiprasad perceives the main struggle in the history of Indian thought as one that took place between the materialist tradition and the tradition of world denying idealism. According to him, 'it had throughout been the history of the struggle, sometimes subdued, sometimes acute, between these two basic trends'.[245] Moreover, with

241 Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Philosophy: A Popular Introduction* (New Delhi; People's Publishing House, 1964), hereafter *Indian Philosophy, pai.*
242 *Indian Philosophy, p.xii.*
243 Ibid, p.xii.
244 Ibid, p.xii.
245 *Lokayata: a Study in Ancient Indian Materialism* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1959); hereafter *Lokayata, p.viii.*

this basic struggle was related a number of collateral philosophical positions. Thus, just as the materialist trend was always committed to secularism, rationalism and science-orientation, the idealist trend has for its main correspondents mysticism, obscurantism and scripture orientation'.[246] This thesis is the core of all his studies in the philosophical thought of India. 'From the point of view of this basic struggle, the picture that seems to emerge of the Indian philosophical tradition has a great deal of significance for understanding the basic ideological struggle still going on'.[247]

However, Debiprasad tells us, from the fact that there was in Indian philosophy a clearly developed materialist trend, and it was prevalent among the people, deriving from them its name *lokayata,* it is not to be concluded that it was a mature scientific philosophy of materialism. That development was reached only in the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels. The *Lokayata is* proto-materialism: its main value lies in 'showing that the spiritualistic outlook is not innate in man'; something comparable to primitive communism, which is emphasised by the Marxist, not to go back to it, but 'to show that private property and the state machinery are not eternal adjuncts to human existence'.[248] Similarly, he maintains, that while 'the overwhelming majority of the significant Indian philosophers were in fact committed atheists', 'in Marxism alone we come across the scientific culmination of the atheistic enterprise of our ancient and medieval philosophers'.[249] It is; only in Marx's atheism that the main weakness of Indian atheism is overcome. Science in ancient India, more especially the science of medicine, or *ayurveda,* was undoubtedly very advanced, both in its method and philosophy. 'In ancient India the only discipline that

246 lbid, p.viii.
247 lbid, p.viii.
248 lbid, p.xxiv.
249 *Indian Atheism: A Marxist Analysis (Calcutta, Manisha, 1969), p.303.*

promises to be fully secular and contains clear potentials of the modern understanding of natural science is medicine'.[250] But, Debiprasad argues, the Indian scientists had made concessions to 'the counter-ideology' of the law-givers, perhaps to gain for themselves freedom in which they could pursue their discipline, and had for that reason introduced into their works opinions that were the very opposite of their own world view. That prevented also their full development. Fortunately, the theoretical positions once gained by science were not entirely lost to Indian culture. 'They survive in the general fund of Indian philosophical thought'. The substance of Debiprasad's arguments is 'that the Indian struggle for socialism today is related to the struggle for the Indian philosophical heritage'. [251]

The three living trends in Indian philosophy, namely, materialism, atheism, and the science of medicine, if nourished and rightly followed, would lead 'the Indian today to Marxism'.[252] Their value lies in this, Debiprasad concludes, that 'In his struggle for socialism, he thus gets equipped with the most powerful ideological weapon and this with the full sanction of his national heritage'.[253]

He views that heritage as the history mainly of the struggle between materialism and idealism: 'the more I tried to work out the materialist tradition in Indian philosophy the more clearly did I see that this could not be done without some account of its antithesis in Indian philosophy, or more specifically, of the tradition of the world-denying idealism'.[254] Walter Ruben, a socialist German Indologist, adds his voice by saying: 'as long as classes continue and class struggle goes

250 *Science and Society in Ancient India* (Research India Publications, Calcutta, 1977), see pp.3-8.
251 See 'Preface' to *Indian Atheism*
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
254 *Lokayata, p.viii.*

on in India, the two main lines of philosophy-materialism and idealism-will continue to fight each other. Idealists will satisfy themselves by re-interpreting Vedanta, materialists will go on in the fine of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and build up the Indian dialectical materialism, which is indispensable for winning the class struggle'. [255]

The very first problem with that agenda is that the philosophical adversary, the ideological *other,* which the Indian Marxists require in the form of Indian idealism does not really exist. The most prevalent, and the most enduring, among the Western misconceptions of India, which has become also an Indian misconception, is the view that (a) Vedanta represents the main tendency of the Indian mind, and (b) it denies the reality of the world and its concerns.

But this is not a Marxist misconception alone. Max Weber attributes to the world-denying tendency the Indian indifference to the growth of science and capitalism. Albert Schweitzer finds in Vedanta the epistemological root from which springs what he sees as the Indian indifference to ethics. The missionary response to Vedanta has been different at different times: finally it was Vedanta that missionaries thought Christianity had most to contend with. Vivekananda found in Vedanta, because it emphasises the unity of all beings, the ultimate ground for human equality and freedom. 'This is why the prayer of a saint is always a prayer of all and for all', Frithj of Schuon would say;[256] and maintain that 'The Vedanta appears among explicit doctrines as one of the most direct formulations possible of that which makes the very essence of our spiritual reality' [257] For A.S. Geden 'The ever recurrent puzzle of the relation of mind to matter is solved, as far as

255 Foreword to *Indian Philosophy, p.xxv.*
256 *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts* (London, Faber & Faber; tr. by Macleod Matheson), p. 111.
257 Ibid, p.95.

the Indian is concerned. Matter is the shadow; mind is the reality; and mind is God. His philosophy, therefore, is cast into the scale, not on the side of materialistic views or dogmas, but on that of an idealistic and reasoned theism': 'His thinking is essentially spiritual and. idealistic'.[258] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) makes out monistic idealism to be the dominant note of Indian philosophy. 'To it the whole growth of Vedic thought points; on it are based the Buddhistic and the Brahmanical religions; it is the highest truth revealed in India"[259] he declares. 'Even systems which announce themselves as dualistic or pluralistic seem to be permeated by a strong monistic character': 'If we can abstract from the variety of opinion and observe the general spirit of Indian thought, we shall find that it has a disposition to interpret life and nature in the way of monistic idealism'.[260]

In brief, Radhakrishnan maintained that monistic idealism is the highest truth revealed in India. The Indian Marxists maintain that in India the battle between idealism and materialism was bitterly fought. They maintain that the philosophy of the Indian masses was essentially materialistic. Radhakrishnan maintained that 'Philosophy in India is essentially spiritual'. To maintain that it is essentially the one or essentially the other is essentially all wrong. That is because Indian thought did not ever posit any irreconcilable opposition between the material and the spiritual. Nor did it ever place one-sided emphasis on either.

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258 See his essay on 'God' in *ERE, vol.VI* (1913), p.290.
259 *Indian Philosophy* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1923), Vol. I, pp.31-2.
260 lbid, Vol. 1, p.32.

(ix) (d) ***Indian Idealism and Realism: Misconceptions***

Neither did it deny the reality of the world and the concreteness of the empirical man. There is no question that the Indian position as regards the external world is, in the main, that of realism. Lokayata, Ajivika, Jainism, Samkhya-Yoga, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Mimamsa, and Buddhism-all are philosophies of realism. But the word 'realism' is so imprecise that to apply it to them indiscriminately is sure to cause misunderstanding. 'Realism' denotes in the history of Western philosophy no single or unified theory as to the nature of the physical world and the ways of knowing it. Therefore it is difficult to say precisely what realism is. It invokes very diverse memories. From naive realism, where it was assumed that things are exactly as they appear to be; through the theory of sense-data, which maintains that we cannot say we know things as they are, because between our knowledge of objects and the objects themselves there is the intervening sense-data; to that stage of realism where the attention came to be fixed on the relation between the structure of fact and the structure of proposition. Nearly as diverse as the trends among Western realists, most Indian systems, acknowledging matter as distinct from mind, start with the empirically given data and seek to explain the relation between perception and material fact, between truth and error, between that which is known and that which knows. [261] There is considerable difference, of approach and detail, among Indian realists. As regards the ontological aspect of realism, there are likewise considerable differences among them.

For example, on the one hand, there is the predominant realist view that matter exists permanently. On the other hand, as in Buddhism, while it is accepted that matter exists as a phenomenon independent of

261 For a concise account of the realistic theories of knowledge, see M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Conceptions of Values* (Mysore, Kavyalaya Publishers, 1975), pp.49-83.

mind, it is argued that nothing exists permanently. Everything is in a constant flux; both the material object and what is mistakenly called the knowing 'self' are mere changing aggregates of certain constituents, which are in a flux too. 'Buddhism has never held that the real is necessarily the permanent', Rhys Davids says.[262]

A similar problem arises with the word 'idealism'. The entire body of what is called 'Indian idealism' consists of the views in some of the major *Upanisad,* in the later Buddhist school of Vijnanavada, and in the commentaries on the *Upanisad* by Gaudapada (c. 788 A.D.) and Sankara.[263] But the word 'idealism' cannot, without causing profound misunderstanding, be applied even to them. In the history of Western philosophy idealism has been of various kinds, the differences among idealist philosophers being quite substantial. The least that is common to them is the view that the reality of the world is not what it appears to be, so that there is a world of appearance and there is a world of reality. Although this minimum requirement does seem to cover the philosophies of Indian idealism, the Indian inquiry into the nature of the world, of which Indian idealism is a part, is located in so vastly different an order of questioning, that its results, both epistemological and ethical, are very different from the results of Western idealism. The core of idealism in Western thought, especially from Berkeley (1685-1753) onwards, both in Germany and in England, lies in the view that the physical world has no existence apart from the perceiving mind. This does not wholly apply to Indian idealism so called.

The main conception of Sankara's philosophy, to take one example, is very different from the idealism, say, either of Hegel or of

262 See his article on 'Reality (Buddhist)', *ERE, Vol. X (1918), p.592.*
263 For a detailed study of these, see Surendranath Dasgupta, *Indian Idealism* (Cambridge University Press, 1933).

Berkeley. Hegel does not say, like Sankara, that the external world and its variety are illusory in an ultimate sense, or in any sense. To Hegel, the world is rather a manifestation of Spirit, which is the ultimate reality. Unlike Sankara, he understands the world, moreover, as a System of Reason, unfolding itself towards a grand purpose, where events and individuals are of significance only in so far as they are in harmony with Spirit. Therefore, along with *Science of Logic* (1812-16), he wrote also the *Philosophy of History.* In Sankara's philosophy, *history* could not be a meaningful category, at any rate not in the sense in which that concept became in Western civilisation a most fundamental one.

Nor is there any conceptual similarity between Sankara and Berkeley as regards the status of physical objects or individual beings. To Berkeley, the essence of a thing lies in its being perceived. To get over the objection that if the reality of a thing were to depend upon its being perceived, then it must cease to exist when it is not being perceived, a position that goes against common sense, Bishop Berkeley brought God into the picture. Even when a thing is not being perceived by anybody, he argued, it continues to exist none the less, because it is being perceived by God.

In Sankara no such device was called for. When twitted by his fellow philosophers that he regarded hard objective facts as illusion, maya, or *mithya,* he replied that he did not hold the material world to be entirely unreal, nor an illusion of the sort that one has when, for example, in darkness one mistakes a piece of twisted rope for a snake. He only held that the world is functionally real, *vyavaharic-satta,* but vanishes as an illusion in the light of the ultimate truth. The latter being not easy of achievement, the world continues to exist for all practical purposes. And even when one gains ultimate knowledge, it is not the external world that vanishes, but one's hitherto wrong attitude towards it. So even the Sankara-Vedanta, the monistic idealism, can

hardly be fitted into any kind of idealism known to the West. This is apart from the fact that idealism, like solipsism, is scarcely a theory that can be maintained with sincerity, without the subterfuge of one variety or another, in this case 'relatively real' or such like.

Similarly the Buddhist Vijnanavada cannot be called idealism. The two main postulates of idealism are: *(a)* that matter is a creation of mind; and (b) that mind is the ultimate reality. The position of Vijnanavada is that neither mind nor matter has any reality. All phenomenal knowledge, according to this school, is without essence or truth. What we perceive as the external world is no doubt a creation of the mind; but the mind, creating the illusion of external objects, is in itself without substance. Called *alaya-vijnana,* it has no origin, no existence no end. It is merely a hypothetical state to explain somehow the phenomenal illusion. Both 'being' and 'non-being' are thus nothing. That state cannot even be named. The *Lankavatara-sutra,* the main text of this school, however, gives it a name: *sunyata,* or 'voidness', or *tathata,* 'thatness'. But assuming that Vijnanvada is idealism, then after 'that single journey' into it, according to A.K. Warder, 'The Indian Buddhists for the most part quickly retreated from any idealist position', 'and reworked their theory of knowledge'.[264] Dignaga (480 A.D.), the most outstanding philosopher after Nagarjuna (300 A.D.), eliminated such Vedantic tendencies that had crept into Buddhism, besides trying to build a more positive theory of knowledge that would escape the annihilating dialectic of Nagarjuna.

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264 A.K. Warder, *Outline of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass, 1971) P.10.

(ix) (e) Indian Atheism Different from the Western

As regards the atheism of the major part of Indian philosophy, it is indisputably true, as Debiprasad shows in his *Indian Atheism,* that the idea of God was considered philosophically not necessary either to explain the creation of the world or the human condition. It is undeniable that Lokayata, Jainism, Buddhism, Sarnkhya, and Mimamsa are frankly *nirisvara,* or 'without-God'. It is undeniable, too, that when Yoga and Nyaya introduced into their philosophy the idea of God, that was done for reasons that had very little do with their ontology. 'God', *Isvara,* remains in them entirely unconnected with the rest of their philosophical positions. Mimamsa ridiculed the arguments advanced by Nyaya as 'proofs' for the existence of God. This was to ensure that the Veda retained their position as supreme authority. They were declared as uncreated, *apauruseya,* each vedic command carrying its own validity, which no experience could upset, nor reasoning disprove. The Mimamsa philosophers undertook a vigorous refutation, therefore, of every argument which Nyaya had advanced as ground for belief in God, which Nyaya had done, in a philosophic sense, gratuitously anyway.

But it is wrong to say that the Indian philosophical standpoint was one of 'committed atheism'. As a general statement that is profoundly misleading. It will require to be qualified in several important ways. The Indian philosophical position was not 'atheistic' in the Western sense of that word. In order to be that, it would have to be concerned with God as the explanation of the creation of the world. Indian philosophy for the most part was really not concerned with that problem. Its non-creationist view of the world was derived, not from opposing and rejecting the views of some theology based on revelation, but from a systematic concern with the problem of cause and effect. The non-theistic character of Indian philosophy was already entailed in the various theories of causation, the precise

relation between 'cause' and 'effect', and the question whether there was even such a thing as 'cause', being the most substantial part of Indian epistemology. The rest, including Indian ethics, followed mostly from the different positions taken in that regard.

Western atheism, in rejecting the creationist view of the world and man, like that of Christianity, was committed also to a view of the human condition from which was removed every trace of the spiritual and the transcendent. The former was not a position that could be maintained with any degree of certainty; for it was quite as impossible to prove that God does not exist as it was to prove that He does. The question whether God exists is a question that cannot ever be resolved in the realm merely of reason. Marxism, the apotheosis of Western atheism, accuses Christianity of dogmatism and violence. But Marxism, in its committed atheism, is no less dogmatic; nor has its own history in the political form of communism been any less violent. Metaphysical justification of violence characterises Marxism as much as it did medieval Christianity: one in the name of History, the other in the name of God. Western atheism implied, moreover, the impossibility of an ethic that could be anything more than a collectively agreed social arrangement which must keep changing with changing social conditions. This brought to the surface its inherent nihilism: 'if there is no God, then everything is permissible'. In the case of Indian non-theism, or atheism, with the exception, perhaps, of the Caravaka school none of these consequences followed. It remained at once non-creationist and transcendental. It would maintain, with perfect consistency, that man is not simply a material being, nor is his destiny in the material world alone.

To ignore this fundamental difference between Western atheism and Indian non-theism, is to misinterpret a most central feature of Indian philosophy, and therefore of Indian life.

(ix) (f) ***A Marxist Trial***

With Kosambi as one exception, the general temper of Indian Marxists has been that only that part of the philosophical heritage of India which may lead to Marxism is of any value; the rest is medieval, religious, unscientific, irrational, and reactionary. And even the materialist, and the atheistic, part is not self-sufficient. Marxism is their ultimate fulfilment. Any contrary suggestion must be put down severely. This attitude was brought out most clearly in that huge quarrel that took place within the Communist Party of India over Bani Deshpande's book *The Universe of Vedanta.* The book carried a *Foreword by* the chairman of the Party, Sripad Amrit Dange (18991991), one of the founders of the Communist Party of India, and also Deshpande's father-in-law.

Deshpande's main concern was to demonstrate that the dialectical method of understanding the world was not only known to India but that it had found its highest development in Vedanta. Dialectics is the fundamental method of the Vedanta philosophy: 'the dialectical outlook, its philosophy and laws are not the creation of Marx, Hegel or Aristotle. It was already a fully developed concept in India long before the early Greeks who apparently themselves appear to be picking up the threads of all the Indian schools of philosophy in the same order as the Indians developed them'. Deshpande argued that the ancient Indian thinkers developed the doctrine of dialectic in the realm of philosophy not only up to the point of perfection which only Marx could accomplish but even developed it to an amazingly higher level which no philosopher or scientist so far has reached'.

It was only the Vedanta philosophy, Deshpande maintained, which developed the most scientific view of space and time until, at the dawn of the twentieth century. Einstein explained it with the modem methods of the natural sciences. Indian thought was thoroughly scientific in its outlook. 'I have proved that Patanjali was the first

thinker in the world who had proved the *materiality of* time and the *relativity of* space and time more than 2000 years before Einstein could establish it in this century'. Deshpande further maintained that monistic idealism is not all that Vedanta is: the *dvaita,* or dualistic, philosophies *of* Samkhya and Yoga are parts *of* Vedanta.

Dange spoke *of* the book as 'the first attempt to explain the scientific basis *of* yoga and the philosophy on which it is based'. He viewed the *brahman of* Vedanta as 'a cognisible material reality', the analysis *of* which 'was undertaken by philosophers with such facts of natural science as they could gather at the level of their civilisation'; and he spoke of the 'astounding analysis and synthesis they did, which are more or less equal to the conceptions of modem sciences regarding space and time and the cognition'. He spoke of intuition 'as an instrument of superior knowledge', to which, through the practice of *yoga,* the human body could be conditioned.

The Central Executive Committee *of* the CPI put *The Universe of Vedanta* on trial as a dangerous heresy. On 6-7 May 1975 the trial took place in a fashion very similar to that *of* the medieval Church. The eminent men *of* the Communist Party of India, led by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, denounced Bani Deshpande and his book in the strongest possible language. The accused was allowed to defend his views. That he did with unrepentant passion. The accusation was brought forth in the holy names of Karl Marx and Dialectical Materialism: the defence was conducted in the equally holy names of Kapila, Patanjali, Vyasa, and Sankara.

Hard words were traded on both sides. To the charge, brought forth by Debiprasad, that he had made Marx, Engels, and Lenin preach Vedanta, Deshpande responded by showing that he had done nothing of the kind, and called the charge itself as 'the limit of purposeful slander'. For his main thesis was that Vedanta is not, as it is made out to be, mystic and speculative, but, on the contrary, is

rooted-in dialectical reasoning, as Marx's understanding of the world would be two millennia later.

Chairman Dange himself was on trial for writing his *Foreword to The Universe of Vedanta,* which he described as 'a thesis by itself'. He was severely criticised by Debiprasad, G.Adhikari, and Hiren Mukerjee, for his support to Deshpande's thesis. In his very brief defence Dange rejected that criticism because it did not 'embrace the real core of the questions' Deshpande had raised. Those were questions, Dange said, concerning *(a)* 'dialectics, its foundations and character in Vedanta or ancient Indian philosophy and its concept of matter in dialectical motion'; (b) 'new research in India philosophy, particularly its Vedanta school and its understanding of brahma, matter, space and time in their dialectical and integrated relationship and all that it leads to; and (c) 'the role of "creative intuition" in historical developments'.

The trial ended with the verdict, endorsed by a resolution of the Central Secretariat of the CPI, that (i) *'The Universe of Vedanta* written by Bani Deshpande grossly violated the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism and scientific thinking generally, overlooked the real achievements of our culture and philosophy and glorified negative features which were the results of the pressures and needs of the decadent ruling exploiting classes'; and (ii) 'The foreword by Dange basically defends this wrong, unscientific and anti-Marxist-Leninist approach and contains other untenable formulations, e.g. on intuition and yoga'. The proceedings of the trial were published a year later in the form of a book *Marxism on Vedanta.*[265]

265 *Published by the People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976.*

(x) Hindu Nationalism:

(a) Madhav Golwalkar

The Hindu Mahasabha was established in the same year in which the Muslim League came into existence, 1906. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded in the same year in which the Communist Party of India was born, 1925. Were these no more than coincidences in time? Or were they causally connected? In either event, their simultaneous advent would now seem to have been an invisible herald of conflicts that would touch Indian society so very deeply. For they would battle as regards the innate character of Indian thought, Indian life-and the Indian future.

Since the concept of *Hindutva,* or 'Hindu-ness', has been for the past seven or eight decades a most considerable part of the Indian perceptions of India, and therefore of Indian politics, let us have a brief look at it. Its exponents have been very many, of whom the two most influential were Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) and Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar. Savarkar was a legendary personality of the Indian freedom movement, but a tragic figure in free India. President of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1942, it is to him that we owe the concept of *Hindutva,* which was set forth in his book with that title, and published in 1923. It is in that book that Savarkar developed the twin idea of *Hindutva* and *Hindu Rashtra,* or 'Hindu nation'.[266]

There is no denying that Golwalkar was initially influenced, at any rate so far as his own understanding of those ideas was concerned, by Savarkar. Since they found their fullest expression in Golwalkar, reverentially called 'Guruji', let us look for them in what he was saying. From 1940 to 1973 the chief, or the *Sarasanghachalak, of* the

266 *For a recent study of Savarkar, concentrating mostly on his analysis of the 1857 uprising against British rule, and his novel Kalapani (1927), as statements of Indian nationalism, on the one hand, and a vision of Hindu consolidation, on the other, see Suresh Sharma, 'Savarkar: Quest for a Hindu consolidation', at the. forthcoming Hinduism, ed. D.L. Sheth and Ashis Nandy.*

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, more popularly known as the RSS, Golwalkar propounded his views in *We or Our Nationhood Defined,* first published in 1939, and then in 1947. It was withdrawn subsequently and never reprinted. Golwalkar disowned it, because it was not a scientific presentation of the complex subject; nor did he any longer believe in the opinions he had expressed in it.[267] Several of his public talks and speeches were later brought together, translated into English, and published in 1966 as *Bunch of Thoughts.*[268] While it is that text on which this review is based, I have consulted throughout the texts of his speeches, 1940 to 1973, in Hindi, which have been brought together as *Sri Guruji: Sarnagra Darshana,* in seven volurnes.[269]

Golwalkar was born, at Nagpur, on 19 February 1906; the same year in which the All India Muslim League was established at Dacca. The Muslim League would be the instrument of Muslim nationalism; Golwalkar would be the most eminent exponent of Hindu nationalism. In 1928 he took his Master's Degree in science from the Banaras Hindu University, and taught there as a professor from 1930 to 1933. It is not quite clear why he gave up his life of a teacher and took to studying law. He got his law degree in 1935. But he did not practise as a lawyer either. Impelled by a deeper quest for the meaning of his life, he went 'to Calcutta in the following year to be with Swami Akhandananda of the Ramakrishna Mission; and on 13 January 1937 received from him initiation, preparatory to the life of a *sannyasin.*

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267 I have this on the authority of Dr. Devendra Swarup, Vice-Chairman of. the Deendayal Research Institute, New Delhi, formerly editor of the weekly Pancaianya.

268 *Bunch of Thoughts* (Vikram Prakashan, Bangalore: 1966).

269 Published by Bharatiya Vichar Sadhana, Nagpur 1974-8 1. 1 am indebted to Dr Devendra Swarup for suggesting that I should consult *Samagra Darshana,* and for making available to me his personal set of those volumes.

However, the Swami died some three weeks later, and Golwalkar returned to Nagpur. On the death, on 21 June 1940, of Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Madhav Golwalkar was appointed as his successor on 3 July.

The day after Gandhi was assassinated on 31 January 1948, Golwalkar was arrested on the absolutely unfounded suspicion that the assassin, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, was a member of the Sangh, and that, in what he did, he was motivated by its ideology. The Government declared a ban on the S angh. *1* But he was released on 6 August, arrested again in Delhi on 12 November, and moved to the Nagpur Jail two days later. On 12 July 1949 the Government lifted the ban on the Sangh when it was proved beyond doubt that the Sangh was innocent. The next day Golwalkar was set free unconditionally.

Golwalkar was by all accounts a charismatic figure. But, again by all accounts, he was a very affectionate person, too. Whenever, in the vast extended family of the Sangh, there was a personal occasion of joy or grief, and if the person was known to him, he would unfailingly write words of blessing or comfort. Unmindful of his own health, he would, like Gandhi, worry about the health of others. His face especially his eyes, were those of a romantic visionary. But his self-possession was that of a man who had stilled all dreams and lived a life of self-abnegation.[270] Ihere was perfect symmetry between his thin locks of flowing hair, flowing down his chest, and his slender frame, creating the impression of a physical artistic balance that nothing could

270 *A lot of things were involved in it. A detailed study of this episode will, perhaps, lead one to the conclusion that, even though the RSS was not a political orgranisation, and therefore no threat to the Congress, the Congress Government wanted first to embarrass it, and then to put pressure on it to merge its immense organisation with the Congress.*

disturb. Were he not to be the guiding light of the Rashtriya Swayarnsevak Sangh, what would he be in his life? A poet philosopher, undoubtedly.Because many of his speeches are also superb literature. But if his body suggested great refinement, of thought and feeling, it did not suggest carrying within itself almost limitless energy which, until there was in it life no more, 5 June 1973, he would devote to Hindu regeneration.

Golwalkar starts with the proposition that a trust, 'a divine trust', has been laid upon the Hindus. That trust consists in the 'knowledge of the Inner Spirit which will charge the human mind with the sublime urge to toil for the happiness of mankind, while opening out full and free scope for every small life-speciality on the face of the earth to grow to its full stature'.[271] It lies in 'the science of realisation of that Great Unifying Principle'.[272] He maintains that 'This knowledge is in the safe custody of Hindus alone. It is a divine trust, we may say, given to the charge of the Hindus by Destiny'.[273] To him 'it is the grand world-unifying thought of Hindus alone that can supply the abiding basis for human brotherhood'.[274]

How can we say that it is Hindu society alone that can fulfil this grand world mission and none else?', he asks: is it not 'too proud a claim'?[275] He answers this by saying that at first sight it may appear to be so. 'Nevertheless it is a bare statement of fact which we can readily appreciate when we observe the historical processes at work in our land as well as in other countries. History has recorded that it is in this land alone that, right from the hoary times, generation after generation

271 *Bunch of Thoughts, p.7.*
272 Ibid, *p.8.*
273 Ibid, *p.7.*
274 Ibid, *pp.7-8.*
275 Ibid, *pp.7-8.*

of thinkers and philosophers, seers and sages rose to unravel the mysteries of human nature'.[276] 'It is inevitable, therefore, that in order to be able to contribute our unique knowledge to mankind, in order to be able to live and strive for the unity and welfare of the world, we stand before the world as a self-confident, resurgent and mighty nation'.[277] The agenda of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is 'to fulfil that age-old national mission by forging, as the first step, the present-day scattered elements of Hindu society into an organised and invincible force both on the plane of the Spirit and on the plane of material life. Verily this is the one real practical world mission-if ever there was one'.[278]

Golwalkar's self-understanding as a Hindu consists in his view that the Hindu people are 'without -- beginning' and cannot, for that reason, be defined precisely.[279] He declares: 'To define such a people is impossible, just as we cannot express or define Reality because words came into existence after the Reality. Similar is the case with the Hindu people. We existed when there was no necessity for any name. We were the good, the enlightened people. We were the people who knew about the laws of nature and the laws of the Spirit. We built a great civilisation, a great culture and a unique social order. We had brought into actual life almost every thing that was beneficial to mankind. Then the rest of humanity were just bipeds and so no distinctive name was given to us. Sometimes, in trying to distinguish our people from others, we were called 'the enlightened'-the Aryas-and the rest, the Mlechhas. When different faiths arose in different lands in course of time and those alien faiths came in contact

276 Ibid, p.8.
277 Ibid, p. 10.
278 Ibid, p. 10.
279 Ibid, pp.46-8.

with us, then the necessity for naming was felt'.[280] His view is that the name 'Hindu', 'derived from the river Sindhu, has been associated with us in our history and tradition for so long that it has now become our universally accepted and adored name'.[281]

'What, then, is the positive content of that word?'[282] he asks. He answers this by saying that there are certain 'special features which mark out the Hindus as a distinct people'.

One: 'To a Hindu, life is not aimless': 'The realisation of his true nature-the innate Spark of Divinity, the Reality in him-which alone takes man to the state of ever-lasting supreme bliss, is the one aim before him': 'That aim is not one of greatness, measured in terms of power, position, name or fame'.[283]

Two: the Hindu theory of rebirth. 'It is the lighthouse of Hinduism gone which sheds this light of immortal hope that all is not over with this present life but there is eternal time before us to put our shoulders to the wheel, life after life, and reach the destination. It is the Hindu alone, in the vast mass of humanity, who holds aloft this torch of hope and confidence'.[284]

Three: 'Our philosophy says, do your work, do your duty in a self-less spirit'.[285] 'What is the nature of our duty? From where are we to begin and how are we to lead our life so that we may reach that Ultimate Reality?'[286] 'We must be able to see its objective manifestation in this objective world, something concrete, something living which

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280 Ibid, p.47
281 Ibid, pp.47-8; see also pp. 98-9
282 Ibid, p.48.
283 Ibid, p.48.
284 Ibid, p.49.
285 Ibid, p.49.
286 Ibid, p.49.

we can feel and experience and through which we will be able to complete the process of realisation'.[287] Man is that objective manifestation. 'Let us try to identify our joys and sorrows with an ever-increasing circle of men, expand thus our being and ultimately realise the Great Reality pervading the entire universe'.[288] 'Service to humanity is verily service to God. This has been a special feature of our philosophy of life'.[289]

And Four: 'The standard of greatness with us has always been one's inner possession and not one's outside possessions'.[290] 'Therefore, whereas the general mass of people in other countries have worshipped a great military hero or a mighty chieftain, we find in our land that even the great heroes and monarchs have worshipped the dust of the feet of half-naked *sannyasins* living in forests without a piece of cloth to call their own.

Why? Because of our way of looking at life, because of our realisation that the quality of the inner being alone is abiding'.[291]

Golwalkar's perceptions of the Hindus and the rest, of we and they, and of the possible relation between the two, are determined, like those of the others we have so far considered, by his main concern. The concern of missionaries was to Christianise India. The concern of British rule was to Westernise India and make it a part of the modem age of science and capitalism. The concern of the Indian Marxists is to end the wretched exploitation of the Indian masses, and, in freeing them from the double chain of Indian idealistic philosophy and modem capitalism, offer them hope and dignity in scientific socialism. To bring India, by industrialising it, into the age of modernity

287 Ibid, pp.49-50.
288 Ibid, p.50.
289 Ibid, p.50.
290 Ibid, pp.50-1.
291 Ibid, p.5 1.

and free its people from myths and religion, was the concern of Jawaharlal Nehru. Ranade's concern was to free Hindu society of its degrading practices; of Gokhale, to free India from the prison of old world ideas. The concern of Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was to free the Muslims from the tyranny of the Hindu majority, and keep Islam from being overpowered by Hinduism. For Jotiba Phule and Bhimrao Ambedkar the concern was to free the depressed castes from the tyranny of Hinduism and its caste-order. For Ramaswami Naicker the concern was to free the non-Brahmans from the tyranny of the Brahmans. The concern of Gandhi was to free India of all these conflicts and the evil of modernity. For Vivekananda the concern was to restore to the Indian masses their lost individuality, and to mankind its lost unity. For Gandhi and Vivekananda alike the concern was, above all, to free the human mind of the notion that one's happiness requires the conquering of the *other*.

Golwalkar's concern is with the humiliation of the Hindus at the hands first of the Muslims and then the British. For that, however, he blames neither. 'It was not the Muslims or the English who were our enemies but we ourselves '[292]. They have been predatory by nature, and it is in them 'to overrun, plunder and destroy other weaker countries,[293] he says. The problem lay with the Hindus. 'It was the absence of national consciousness, and the feeling of being the organic limbs of a single national entity, and the resultant mutual hatred, discord, jealousy and intenecine quarrels to gain little selfish ends-well, these have eaten into the vitals of our nation over the last thousand years,[294] he explains. His concern is to make Hindu society strong and

292 Ibid, p.206.
293 Ibid, p.206.
294 Ibid, p.206.

invincible. That determines the way he perceives the Buddhists, the Muslims, and the Christians in India. That decides, too, his perception of Western civilisation and of liberalism and communism, and their impact on Indian society.

But what his understanding of the Hindu past determines, most of all is his conception of *Hindu Rashtra,* or the Hindu nation. Everything else follows from that. There is hardly any modem Indian thinker, or public figure, who has devoted greater thought to the question of nationalism in India than Golwalkar.[295] Golwalkar is concerned with showing 'the correct and positive and abiding concept of our nationhood,[296] in refutation of the thesis which he says was resolutely spread by the British, that India was never a nation. 'What, then, is that true concept of our nationality?'[297] He first mentions the modem Western concept of 'nation', of which, he points out, there are three main elements.[298] *First,* a well-defined and contiguous piece of land with natural boundaries. *Second,* the people living in that territory should have a sense of belonging to it, and 'love and adoration for it as their mother-land, as the place of their sustenance, their security and prosperity'. And, *third,* they should be not just a mass of men, but bound together in a 'community of life-ideals, of culture, of feelings, sentiments, faith and traditions'. He then applies these Western criteria to the case of India and concludes that India was a nation long before England was one.

But the people in India who answer the requisite criteria of a nation are the Hindus, and they alone. For it is only the Hindus who are

295 See, more especially, *Samagra Darshana. Vol.1, pp.108-9, 135-47; Vol.3,* pp.2-11, 123-31; VolA, pp.161-3 (for the definitions of 'national', 'communal', 'enemy', and 'anti-national'); vol 5, p. 15, *pp.89-90; vol. 6, pp.* 104-6, *p. 172.*
296 *Bunch of Thoughts, p.* 122.
297 lbid, p.122.
298 Ibid, p.122-3.

'united into a coherent and well-ordered society having common traditions and aspirations, a common memory of the happy and unhappy experiences of their past life, common feelings of friendship and hostility, and all their interests intertwined into one identical whole'.[299] He declares: 'All the requisites for making a full-fledged nation are thus fulfilled in the life of this great Hindu People. Therefore, we say that in this land of ours, Bharat, the national life is of the Hindu People. In short, this is the Hindu Nation'.[300]

What status would Golwalkar then give to the Muslims and the Christians who have had India as their country for centuries? Undoubtedly that they have, he says. Nor is the question one of religious beliefs and faith. He does not say that 'with a change in the method of worship an individual ceases to be a son of the soil'.[301] On the contrary, he says, 'He cannot be a Hindu at all who is intolerant of other faiths .[302] 'But the question before us now is', he asks, 'what is the attitude of those people who have been converted to Islam and Christianity? They are born in this land, no doubt. But are they true to its salt? Are they grateful towards this land which has brought them up? Do they feel that they are the children of this land and its tradition and that to serve it is their great good fortune? Do they feel it a duty to serve her?[303] The answer to these questions, he says, is: 'No'.[304]

He puts forth a principle, a test, of nationality. 'The mere fact of birth or nurture in a particular territory, without a corresponding mental pattern, can never give a person the status of a national in that

299 Ibid, p. 123.
300 Ibid, p. 126.
301 Ibid, p. 127.
302 Ibid, p. 127.
303 Ibid, p. 127.
304 Ibid, p. 127.

land. Mental allegiance has been, in fact, the universal criterion for nationality'[305] 'So too is the case with our nation. Mere common residence or birth and growth in our land cannot imply that the same loyalties, qualities and patterns of life exist amongst all its residents' [306] He puts the Muslims and the Christians to this test of mental allegiance to India, of which they are citizens; and, in a language which is as strident as it is clear, he declares them wanting precisely in that quality of feeling.

His complaint against the Muslims is that 'whatever we believed in, the Muslim was wholly hostile to W; 'He was tooth and nail opposed to our way of life in all aspects-religious cultural, social'; 'He had imbibed that hostility to the very core'.[307] The Christians 'consider themselves as agents of the international movement for the spread of Christianity and refuse to offer their first loyalty to the land of their birth and behave as true children of the heritage and culture of their ancestors .[308] He maintains that every Muslim locality in India is, in its mentality, a miniature Pakistan; and the Christians have been trying, especially in the hills of eastern India, to carve out their separate areas of influence, and refers to the findings of the Niyogi Commission in that connection.

His perception of the Buddhists is not very happy either. 'After Buddha, his followers here degenerated. They began to uproot the age-old national traditions of this land. The great cultural virtues fostered in our society were sought to be demolished. The links with the past were hammered away. *Dharma* was at a sad discount. The whole social fabric was being rent to shreds. Devotion to the nation

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305 Ibid, p. 128, also p. 129.
306 Ibid, p. 130.
307 Ibid, pp. 147-8, see the whole chapters X and XH- 1.
308 Ibid, p. 186; see chapter XII-2.

and its heritage had reached such a low pitch that the Buddhist fanatics invited and helped the foreign aggressors who wore the masks of Buddhism. The Buddhist sect had turned a traitor to the mother society and the mother religion'.[309] Golwalkar does not think too highly of Asoka, the Buddhist emperor; because Asoka, in his view, sought to impose upon Indian polity the Buddhist religion. It is Sankaracarya,a *sannyasn,* an incomparable philosopher and unique organiser[310]', whom Guruji venerates. For it was Sankara, he says, 'who came up as the redeemer of our *dharma* and our society'.[311] His devoted followers, according to Guruji, roused the 'true national consciousness and spirit of selfless service' and 'helped society to find its feet once again and throw out the treacherous elements. Buddhism, as a distinct sect, was erased from the mother soil, though, of course, Buddha remained as an Incarnation.'[312]

Golwalkar disapproves of Western civilisation because he perceives its foundations as purely materialistic. According to him, 'Earthy enjoyment is its highest ideal. Their concept of individual freedom lies in allowing the senses full licence to have an unbridled sway over the mind, thereby making a slave of oneself to the brute-instinct', and he talks of 'the Western life-pattern of enjoyment and satisfaction of pleasures of the flesh'.[313] This is the sum total of Golwalkar's understanding of Western civilisation.

He does not think very highly either of democracy or of socialism much less of socialism. He points out that socialism 'has failed to deliver the goods in Russia itself. As a theory it has exploded long

309 Ibid, p.66.
310 Ibid, p.66.
311 Ibid, p.67.
312 Ibid, p.67.
313 Ibid, p.390.

back and now it has exploded in practice also'.[314] Nor does it help to coin, as the secularist Indian leaders are fond of doing, new slogans like 'Democratic Socialism' and 'Socialist Democracy'. 'Democracy and Socialism', he maintains, 'are mutually contradictory. Socialism cannot be democratic and Democracy cannot be socialistic. For, individual freedom, as we have seen, is the first faith with Democracy, whereas it is the first victim of Socialism. In Democracy, the majesty of the individual is held high, whereas, in Socialism, he is only a cog in the wheel, only a lifeless screw in the colossal machine called State'.[315]

Golwalkar's concern with these two principal political forms of the Western world arises from his concern 'with the problem of deciding the right pattern of our future national reconstruction'.[316] He assesses their value, in regard both to their underlying principles and results, and raises the issue whether either of them is suitable to the Indian temper. He traces their origin to the social reaction against the excesses of a previous political order: of democracy, in the reaction against the enslavement of the individual brought about by monarchy and the theory of the divine right of kingship; of socialism, against the exploitation of a vast number of men, this time brought about in the name of 'individual freedom', 'sanctity of the individual's rights', and 'equality of opportunity for all'.[317]

They have also another common origin and 'stem from a common concept of the goal of human life'. He says: 'According to the Western thought-from which both the concepts of Democracy and Communism took birth-the life of man for all practical purposes is limited to the physical plane. And the human being is just a bundle of

314 Ibid, p. 193.
315 Ibid, p. 194.
316 Ibid, p. 11.
317 Ibid, pp. 11-12.

physical wants. Accordingly, production and distribution of material objects which were believed to satisfy the material appetites of man became the one all-consuming passion of all their theories. Further, equality of man was propounded on the material plane because all men were equally in need of all these basic material needs'. [318]

But this materialistic perception of human life must lead, according to Golwalkar, to a perpetual conflict between the individual and society. 'As the individual was only a physical entity goaded entirely by those physical desires, there was no reason for him to look upon society as anything other than an instrument to serve his needs. But a society made up of such individuals exclusively dedicated to their own selfish interests could not be expected to endure even for a day'.[319] It is this basic conflict that expressed itself in the form of Capitalism on the one hand and Communism on the other', he argues; 'on the one hand, the individual becoming the enemy of society and on the other, the society becoming the enemy of the individual'.[320] Therefore, 'both the systems are now trying to mitigate the evils that have flowed from their common material concept of human goal':[321] 'both have had to resile from their original stand and forced to move towards each other-Democracy from its individualism towards collectivism and Communism from its collectivism towards individualism'.[322]

Golwalkar concludes that neither democracy nor socialism is a right pattern of Indian national reconstruction. Their confusing combination will work even less. However, if the choice were only between these two, he would prefer democracy and reject socialism and communism altogether. His rejection of socialism is based on the ground that 'It is

318 Ibid, p. 16
319 Ibid, p. 16.
320 Ibid, p. 16-17.
321 Ibid, p. 17.
322 Ibid, pp. 15-16.

not in our blood and tradition. It has absolutely nothing to do with the traditions and ideals of thousands of years of our national life. It is a thought alien to crores of our people here': 'it does not possess even the primary qualification to serve as an ideal for our national life'.[323] All the assumptions from which communism derives its political philosophy are opposed to the traditions in the light of which the people of India live. Its most central doctrine, the materialistic interpretation of history, has not so far had a single empirical and historical proof. A real communist revolution takes place, for the first time, not in the industrialised countries of the West, as the Marxist interpretation of history had predicted, but in an industrially backward-Russia.

But what he rejects, above all, is the notion that the people of India must conceive their national future in terms of either one of the two dominant isms of the Western world. 'This is highly humiliating to a country which has given rise to an all-comprehensive philosophy, capable of furnishing the true and abiding basis for reconstruction of national life on political, economic, social and all other planes. It would be sheer bankruptcy of our intellect and originality if we believe that human intelligence has reached its zenith with the present theories and 'isms' of the West'.[324] It is to this theme that he returns again and again.For 'It has become a fashion these days to deride our ancient ideals and traditions and talk of recasting our society in the mould of other modern 'isms'. But such attempts at supplanting our life pattern by another, paying no heed to the natural blossoming of our innate character, can only result in degeneration. Already we are witnessing the signs of its dreadful effect on our society.[325]

323 Ibid, p. 193.
324 Ibid, p. 194.
325 Ibid, p. 10.

Golwalkar complains that India is drifting. 'We do not know where we are going. Is there today anything that can be pointed out as the essence of our national life? Our way of life, our method of education, our mode of behaviour, our way of dress, our way of building houses, towns and cities and all such elements of our national ethos have undergone such an awful change that we do not stop for a moment to consider whether this abject imitation of others is not a humiliation of our national pride, a sure sign of losing our national identity and drifting into intellectual slavery'.[326]

'Our Constitution too', he argues, 'is just a cumbersome and heterogeneous piecing together of various articles from various Constitutions of Western countries. It has absolutely nothing which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is? No!' [327]

To Golwalkar the federal structure of the Indian constitution is a proof of the fact that 'the framers of our Constitution also were not firmly rooted in the conviction of our single homogeneous nationhood'.[328] In this regard his argument is that 'it was the fragmentation of our single national life in the past into so many exclusive political units that sowed the seeds of national disintegration and defeat. The present federal structure has in it the same seeds of disruption, which are already sprouting in the form of conflicts between States on boundary issues, allocation of river waters, etc'.[329] These quarrels are officially described as 'boundary disputes' and 'fiver water disputes', 'as if they are disputes between two sovereign independent countries'.[330] Similarly the Election Commission has replaced

326 Ibid, p.226.
327 Ibid, p.227.
328 Ibid, p.212.
329 Ibid, p.213.
330 Ibid, p.213.

the system of recognising political parties on a nationwide basis with their recognition on State basis, which 'only indicates that the mental working of the persons at the helm of affairs is dominated by the consciousness of separateness of 'State' units and not the indivisible unity of the entire nation. On the one hand, they pass resolutions on 'national integration' and, on the other, in the actual conduct of national affairs, frame policies that strike at the very concept of national unity![331]

He cites the reorganisation of States on the basis of linguistic divisions as another illustration of such policies. In his view it was the same principle, the principle of self-determination, that was at work both in the partition of India and in the States being restructured on the basis of language. It is this principle, misapplied and abused, which threatens the future of India. 'When one pauses to think of the condition in which our makers of this Constitution lived when they framed the Constitution one sees that the atmosphere then was extremely congenial to the formation and evolution of a Unitary State-One Country, One Legislature, One Executive Centre running the administration throughout the country-an expression of one homogeneous solid nation in Bharat; 'But the mind and reason of the leaders were conditioned by the obsession of a 'federation of states' where each linguistic group enjoyed a 'wide autonomy' as 'one people' with its own separate language and culture’.[332]

The Indian National Congress, Golwalkar argues, seemed to have accepted the British view of India as 'not one country but a continent like what modem Europe is-an extensive piece of land comprising many countries, many peoples, many nationalities all with their

331 Ibid, p.214
332 Ibid, pp.432-3.

distinct racial, cultural and linguistic features'[333], 'linguistically strangers to one another; culturally of different standards; and religiously so far divided as to be always ready t o fly at each other's throat,[334]. He says the British 'never tired of telling the world, particularly to our own people, that it was their providential existence in the country as the sovereign power which had held all these forces of dissension in check and prevented the country from continuing to be a gruesome scene of violence, bloodshed, incessant, intermittent internecine wars, insecurity to life, honour and property,[335]; 'and that it was only because of them, and during their continuance in power, that the sense of common motherland, patriotism and of a common nationality, was being gradually forged out of this bewildering mass of heterogeneous, and often incompatible, peoples'[336]. The leaders of the Indian National Congress, he concludes, never quite disputed this and were of the same mind, which is reflected in the policies that they have followed since independence.

It was from the foregoing understanding which Guruji had of India's past and present that his policy agenda for India's future was derived. His vision of future India occupied him till the end of his most exemplary life. To build India anew is the one central aim of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or the RSS, of which he was the guiding light for more than three decades. It was that vision of future India, a mighty Hindu Nation, or Hindu Rashtra, self-reliant, invincible, all its diversities brought into a cohesive national life, pulsating with *rashtra-bhakti,* or devotion to the nation, which the Indian Marxists were to denounce most fiercely; although they were to acknowledge, however grudgingly, the impressive organisation

333 Ibid, pp.429-30.
334 Ibid, p.430.
335 Ibid, p.430.
336 Ibid, pp.430-1.

which the RSS had patiently built all over India as an instrument of its vision of Hindu India. To the RSS, the Indian Communists, with their agenda of Westernising India in a socialistic mould, were the main adversary, although the Congress, led now by free India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, with its declared aim of Westernising India into universal modernity, in a combined mould of liberal individualism and socialism, was an adversary too.

Golwalkar's vision of resurgent India has the concept of 'nation' as its centre. The Indian nation, he says, is indisputably the Hindu Nation. It has been so for thousands of years. The history of India, in his view, has been the history of Hindu society with its fluctuating periods of glory and degradation. It is to that living entity, Hindu Rastra, that every Hindu must devote his and her thoughts, emotions and service, as a means of fulfilling their own lives. He evokes the vision of India, as it has always been, as *pitr-bhumi* and *matr-bhumi,* or as 'Fatherland' and Motherland'. But he calls upon the Hindus to see India, above all, even as their ancestors did, as *punya-bhumi,* or sacred land'.

In a language that was as stirring as it was clear he advanced the notion now of *rashtra-bhakti,* or 'devotion to nation'. He talked of how 'Hindu society, whole and integrated, should therefore be the single point of devotion for all of us. No other consideration whether of caste, sect, language, province or party should be allowed to come in the way of that devotion to society. That is the criterion for real devotion'.[337] He took this new *bhakti* to the point of talking of 'society as god', *Samajadevata.*[338]

337 Ibid, p. *120.*
338 Ibid, p. *120.*

'We want a 'living God', he said; a living God 'which will engross us in activity and invoke all the powers that reside in our being'.[339] He argues that the worship of idols in the numerous temples that people go to 'does not satisfy us who are full of activity'.[340] The Almighty is to be worshipped as a living God. But where is this 'living God' to be found? In answer he attributes to 'our forefathers' the proposition that the Hindu People 'is the *Virat Purusha,* the Almighty manifesting Himself.[341] In brief, he says, 'the Hindu People is our God'.[342] 'This supreme vision of Godhead in society is the very core of our concept of 'nation' and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage'[343].

He quotes Ramakrishna Paramahamsa as saying: 'Serve man'. But, he argues, *man,* 'in the sense of the whole of humanity, is a very wide concept and, as such, cannot be grasped easily as a single solid entity for us to see and feel. Therefore it is that so many who took up the idea of serving humanity ended in inanity and inaction'.[344] In order to get over this limitation he proposes, as he claims that the ancient Indians had themselves done, that *man* be understood in the first instance as 'the. Hindu People'.[345] 'Therefore, in the devotion to our Living God, the Hindu Society, all the ruling disruptive passions in our minds today have to be given up, as they come in the way of our discharging the essential and foremost duty of upholding and

339 Ibid, pp.24-5.
340 Ibid, p.24.
341 Ibid, p.25.
342 Ibid, p.25.
343 Ibid, p.25.
344 Ibid, p.25.
345 Ibid, p.25.

strengthening the inherent unity of our people'.[346] He concludes: 'Nothing can be holier to us than this land'.[347]

That provides also Golwalkar's answer to the question, 'what path shall India take?' It follows logically from his understanding of what constitutes the Indian nation; the root cause of its historical decline; and what place once again it ought to have in the thoughts and emotions of the people of India. The answer he offers is unambiguous, whatever other infirmity it may have. The problem of Hindu society, and thus of the Indian nation, the two being identical, arises wholly from the evident lack of national consciousness, unity and strength. 'The root cause of our national tragedy then, a thousand years ago, and now, a thousand years after, is the same-utter lack of organised and unified life among the Hindus, the children of this soil,.[348] 'Every page of our history of the past thousand years is a mute witness to this bitter truth operating on our national plane',[349] He tells us that 'it is of no use to curse the external aggressors as being the cause of our degeneration and destruction',[350] rather, 'even after repeated experiences of disgrace and disaster, we failed to learn the one basic lesson that we alone are responsible for our downfall and unless we eradicate that fatal weakness from ourselves we cannot hope to survive as a nation,.[351]

The political agenda of post-independence India cannot remedy the ills of Indian society, Golwalkar argues. On the contrary, democracy, or socialism, or socialist democracy, it has seriously aggravated those very ills. The official policies have demonstrably created in the place

346 Ibid, p.120.
347 Ibid, p.87; see also the whole of Ch. VII-1.
348 Ibid, p.208.
349 Ibid, p.208.
350 Ibid, p.206.
351 Ibid, pp.206-7.

of common 'duties' a sense of separate 'rights'. 'Nowhere is there any stress on 'duties' and a spirit of selfless service'[352] The clamour for 'rights' has promoted only regional and sectional interests and not the national interests. 'The spirit of co-operation which is the soul of society can hardly survive in a climate of the consciousness of egocentric rights. That is why we are finding conflicts among the various component parts in our national life today.'[353]

The Constitution itself describes India as 'a union of States', emphasising thereby the primacy of States and not of the nation as a whole. To have reorganised States themselves on the basis of language has clearly strengthened lingual loyalties, often expressed quite fiercely, and not the loyalty to the nation. Electoral politics in India carried within itself the seeds of self-promotion at the expense of the collective welfare of the people. In order to win elections, the substance of democracy, not only do the political parties, the 'Marxists being no exception, seek utterly unprincipled alliances, which have never worked, but in that process encourage, promote and aggravate those very interests that simply must destroy the sense of national unity.

Golwalkar maintains that the remedy of Indian ills lies in resurgent Hindu Nationalism; for it was in the decline of Hindu character that those ills originate. He insists that Hindu nationalism is not an aggressive creed directed against others. It is an agenda of regeneration, bringing together what is now disunited, of rebuilding what is broken and shattered. It is a process of building, step by step, by an organised effort, the Hindu character, the Hindu manhood, strong and virile, dedicated to one aim: the glory of the Hindu nation.

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352 Ibid, p.27.
353 Ibid, p.27.

But, if nationalism be the one remedy of all Indian ills, ought it not properly be called Indian nationalism? Are the Indian Muslims and Christians not part of it? Golwalkar maintains that they are not. And that is entirely because 'all those communities that are staying in this land yet are not true to its salt, have not imbibed its culture, do not lead the life which this land has been unfolding for so may centuries, do not believe in its philosophy, in its national heroes and in all that this land has been standing for, are, to put it briefly, foreign to our national life. And the only real abiding and glorious national life in this holy land of Bharat has been of the Hindu people'.[354]

Given these assumptions, Golwalkar's 'Hindu Nationalism' naturally follows. He declares: 'Therefore, the foremost duty laid upon every Hindu is to build up such a holy, benevolent and unconquerable might of the Hindu people in support of the age-old truth of our Hindu Nationhood':[355] 'the path of re-establishment of *dharma* shown by all our great masters of the past is clearly the awakening of the Hindu people to the truth of their National Self-the glorious, effulgent Hindu Nationhood'.[356] He further declares: 'It is only when a nation, just as an individual, sticks to its roots of *swadharma* that it grows and blossoms forth in all-round glory and achievement. Pulling out one's roots of *swadharma* and transplanting something else in its place will only result in utter chaos and degeneration'.[357] And since that is what has happened, chaos and degeneration, Hindu nationalism must replace all the Western isms now governing the corporate life of India.

As an important next step he describes its three main characteristics. *One:* Hindu nationalism is not just a political concept, 'a mere bundle

354 Ibid, p. 162.
355 Ibid, p.165.
356 Ibid, p.165.
357 Ibid, p.59.

of political and economic rights', nor is the Hindu nation merely a territorial entity, but 'essentially a cultural one', permeated with the breath of spirituality.[358] Two: it is not based on common economic interests alone,[359] which is not to say that they play no part whatever in its formulation. And *three:* it has never been, nor is it now, a product of antagonism to others.[360] It is rooted in harmony and not in conflict.

Excepting Gandhi, the Mahatma, to the leaders of the Indian National Congress, nationalism was primarily a political phenomenon, with its economic aspects, against colonialism. To the Indian Marxists, and also to Jawaharlal Nehru, it was essentially an economic struggle, with its political forms, to free the masses from capitalist exploitation. Both denied, with varying degrees of passion, that religion or spirituality formed any part of nationalism; and when it did, that it betrayed itself. To Golwalkar, both were absolutely mistaken, and had only slavishly followed the Western ideas of nationalism or, in opposition to nationalism, the Marxian socialism. Neither of the two had any understanding of the deeper cultural and spiritual roots of nationalism in India that arose from a certain philosophy of life which, honestly examined, could only be viewed as Hindu.

The reason why the Rashtriya Swayarnsevak Sangh resolutely kept itself out of politics, Golwalkar explains, and concentrated on the primary task of building Hindu character, was that, in Hindu tradition, life was never 'equated with politics', nor was politics looked upon 'as the pivot of life,'[361] as it is in India now.

He argues that political arrangements being only a means to an end, the end being the highest development of the individual, 'political

358 Ibid, p.22; see also pp.63-5, 67-8, 69-71, 73-4, and pp.343, 347.
359 Ibid, see pp.72-3, 215-6.
360 Ibid, see pp.52-4, 218-9, 220-1.
361 Ibid, p.390.

power is an external appliance which cannot by itself mould the 'inner man' after an ideal. Mere governmental legislation cannot mould the minds of men on the lines of virtue'.[362] Besides, 'political authority, by itself, becomes powerless when it has to play the role of rejuvenating the cultural values and social solidarity; and much worse, if left to itself, it corrupts those high standards. The secret of the immortality of a nation conserving all the noblest of its traditional qualities has to be sought elsewhere'.[363]

Advocating that human quality is decisive in everything, he maintains that 'The power of the organised life of the people imbued with the spiritual urge of our ancient heritage-well, that has been the secret of our immortality all down these ages. That is verily our *Rash tradharma'*[364]. He speaks of 'this deathless potency' of Hindu society. 'Again and again it has risen from the ashes, smashed the stranglehold of the evil forces and established the reign of righteousness': 'How did this miracle happen?',[365] he asks. It happened because 'the basis of our national existence was not political power': 'The political rulers were never the standard-bearers of our society. They were never taken as the props of our national life. Saints and sages, who had risen above the mundane temptations of self and power and had dedicated themselves wholly for establishing a happy, virtuous and integrated state of society, were its constant torchbearers. They represented the *dharmasatta';* and 'the *dharmasatta* continued to hold the people together'.[366]

362 Ibid, p.70.
363 Ibid, pp.70-1.
364 Ibid, p.68.
365 Ibid, p.65.
366 Ibid, p.65.

Political power, Guruji declares, is only one of the several manifestations 'of the innate strength of the people'.[367] The 'real and inexhaustible source of national strength' lies not in political and military power but in the 'dedicated and disciplined life of the people as a whole', ultimately in the 'patriotic and heroic condition of the people'.[368] He speaks of how 'Political and other factors are only temporary and superficial. Political parties come and pass away', 'But society is eternal, immortal'.[369] Hence the ultimate vision of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: 'of a perfectly organised state of our society wherein each individual has been moulded into a model of ideal Hindu manhood and made into a living limb of the corporate personality of society' [370]

Although Madhav Golwalkar's perceptions, forming the ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, were clear and unwavering, and many of his propositions indisputable, they suffer from several infirmities, at least three of them touched also with profound irony.

(1) Golwalkar attributes to the introduction of Western isms into Indian polity its present disorder. But, despite his opposition to building India's future on the foundations of Western political thought, the core of his own teachings in that regard lies in those very foundations, the concept of 'nation', with 'nationalism' as its derivative, providing their two most decisive ingredients.

a. But 'nation' and 'nationalism' form no part whatever of the traditional Dhannic thought, any more than they do of Christianity and Islam. The idea of 'nation' itself as a self-defining principle, which gives to an individual his or her identity, and to a society its overriding value, is unDharmic, unChristian and unIslamic. Not more than four

367 Ibid, p.254.
368 Ibid, p.254.
369 Ibid, p. 119.
370 Ibid, p.61.

hundred years old, probably less, the idea of 'nation' became a central part of the modem quest of freedom from the control of the Church. Modem political thought has been a steady repudiation of the traditional Christian concern with universal Christendom, with the Church as its authority. The concerns of Christianity are not the concerns of nationalism. 'Christian nation' is a profound contradiction in terms.

b. 'Hindu nation' is even a profounder contradiction, and 'Hindu Nationalism' no more than a product of Golwalkar's graft of a Western concept on the body of Dharmic thought in whose name he spoke. The Sanskrit word *rashtra,* which occurs at numerous places in the *Mahabharata,* and in other works, does not in the least connote the modem concept of 'nation'. Nowhere in what he describes as 'Hindu civilisation', or 'Hinduism', is there any concern with 'national glory'.

c. But *that,* not as a deficiency, or indifference to political order as made out by the British and other Western observers, but because, placing man and society in a far more integrated system of thought than what was ever achieved in the history of the West, it had a radically different view of social unity. Golwalkar imports into Dharmic civilisation concerns which it would not have; and forces the concerns it did have, into the Western mould of nationalism. Advocating a total rejection of all Western isms as any remedy to the Indian ills, he speaks of nationalism as one dominant passion India ought to have.

d. Rejecting the possessive individualism of liberalism and democracy, Golwalkar ascribes to 'nation' an individuality that is far more possessive, and infinitely more dangerous. He raises his 'Hindu Nation' to the status of divinity and talks of 'Nation-God' and 'worship of nation'. For this he repeatedly invokes what he puts forth as the sanction of ancient Dharmic thought, a sanction which is simply

invented, when his ideas are actually derived from the German romanticism of the eighteenth century.[371]

e. Golwalkar's glorification of nation comes from the teachings, not of Dharmic thinkers, but those of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), with whom begins the German romantic movement.[372] It is important to observe that the idea of 'humanity', *Humanitat,* was quite as central to Herder's thought as was his concept of the uniqueness of each 'nation'. However, since the influence of a thinker is hardly ever as systematic as his own formulations might have been, it was Herder's glorification of nation, and not his concern with humanity, which came to have a very wide influence on the rise of nationalism not only in Germany, but in other parts of Europe as wen, particularly among the Slavs.

f. Golwalkar also talks of humanity, and of service to man as service to God, but in the next instance limits 'humanity' and 'man' to his Hindu nation. Nationalism had become by the nineteenth century a dominant passion of Europe. Golwalkar, more than any other modem Indian thinker, sought to introduce into his Hindu society the same Western passion.

(2) Like the romantic conception of the German nation, Golwalkar's Hindu nationalism resurrects and appropriates the Semitic notion of 'the chosen people'. He talks of a divine trust that

371 Of the very considerable literature on the influence of German romanticism on the rise of nationalism, see, for example, Guido De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism* (London, Humphrey Milford, 1927; tr. by R.G. Collingwood), pp. 218-29. Also,Reinhold Aris, *History of Political Thought in Germany, from 1789 to 1815* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1936), pp. 207*221.*

372 See F.M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965).

has been laid upon the Hindus. The knowledge of what he calls the Inner Spirit is in the safe custody of the Hindus alone. It is the Hindus alone that can provide the abiding basis for human brotherhood.For it is they alone, thinkers and philosophers, seers and sages, who had unravelled the mysteries of human nature. He talks of the world mission of the Hindus, for they are the chosen people for a divine task. It is only that at no time in its very long history had Dharmic civilisation made even remotely any such claim. It is a Semitic, not Dharmic, idea.

(3) A suggestion of this variety, that the Hindus are chosen by Destiny for a unique world mission, produces the false notion of their innate superiority over others. Not only does this misrepresent grievously the character of classical Dharmic thought, which does not even know the word 'Hindu', but must also lead to profound untruth about other traditions of the world. The highest ideal which Golwalkar can, for example, ascribe to Western civilisation is earthly enjoyment and unbridled sway of the senses over the mind, which is of course a caricature. He contends seriously, but not he alone, that the satisfaction of material appetites is all that there has been to the Western concept of individual freedom. This is not a description but a crude caricature.

(4) What is likewise a prejudice, and quite as much a caricature, is his perception that the Muslims and the Christians of India, all of them, for he makes no exceptions, are lacking precisely in that quality of feeling which is the true test of nationality: mental allegiance. They are not nationalists: only the Hindus, we, are nationalists. For the Hindus alone look upon India as a holy land, motherland, fatherland, every particle of whose dust is sacred to them. Given these assumptions, Golwalkar's Hindu nationalism doubtless followed. But the assumptions themselves had little to do with reality and truth.

a. In actual fact the logical structure of Golwalkar's argument, the argument of *Hindutva,* is simply fallacious. He begins by concluding that India has been a 'Hindu' land, Indian civilisation is 'Hindu' civilisation, its ideals are 'Hindu' ideals, its ways of life are 'Hindu', and then assumes that Indian nationalism can only be 'Hindu' nationalism. In this logic the Indian Muslims and Christians *cannot* have that emotional loyalty to India, now equated with Hindu society, which only the Hindus can. From the presupposition that they *cannot* have, the next step is to conclude that in fact they *do not* have. And since the Muslims *cannot* evidently be Hindus, their nationalism must be separate. The rest followed.

b. If the truth of Hindu nationalism is assumed, then the justice of the Muslim demand for Pakistan could not be denied. It was the logical culmination, even before it was an emotional culmination, of the false doctrine of Hindu nationalism.

c. In his fateful presidential address to the Muslim League session at Lahore, on 24 March 1940, now resolutely demanding a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims, Muhammad Ali Jinnah did no more than apply to the Indian Muslims the same criteria of nationality which the advocates of Hindu nationalism had applied to the Hindus, and assert what was already explicit in the doctrine of Hindu nationalism: the Hindus and Muslims are two nations. 'Musalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation', he said, 'and they must have their homelands, their territory and their State': 'We wish our people to develop to the fullest our spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political life in any way that we think best and in consonance With our own ideals and according to the genius of our people.'

d. The truth is that Muslim nationalism was a product, emotional and political, of Hindu nationalism with its insistence that India's *swa,* or 'one's own', was Hindu. The seeds of the idea of Pakistan were sown, without knowing it, by the Hindu intellectuals and not by

the Muslims. And that is because they had begun to interpret India's past not in the framework that was systematically developed in India, that of *dharma,* but in the framework of the Western political thought of the last two centuries with 'nation', or 'state', or 'nation-state' as its centre. They superimposed the latter on the former, and then insisted that 'nation' has been a category of Hindu thinking for countless centuries.

(5) Golwalkar often quotes Vivekananda in support of his call to the Hindus to develop strength and energy, in one word manhood. But there is little indication that he concerns himself with one dominant concern of Vivekananda: the wretched condition of the Indian masses, in whose service he had preached the Vedanta as the only firm foundation for social and economic equality. Without which, Vivekananda insisted, no nation could achieve political unity, much less national strength and energy.

a. Neither does Golwalkar refer to another central perception of Vivekananda, that it was in Islam and in Islam alone, that the Vedanta had found its true practical application, and therefore what was required for the future of India was a fusion of Islam and Vedanta. That was throughout an article of faith with Vivekananda. Whether, or not, it is philosophically a realistic proposal, is not the question here. What is important is the acknowledgement, the attitude. In Vivekananda's *Works,* that acknowledgement is to be found everywhere; in Golwalkar, nowhere.

(6) The crucial problem with Guruji's perceptions of Indian society arises, I think, from an evident, but startling, lack of harmony between his acknowledgement that *'dharma* constitutes the life-breath of Indian civilisation' and his advocacy of Hindu nationalism. One does not yield the other. And if the phrase *rashtra-dharma,* or 'national *dharma',* should give the impression of being a legitimate part of Dharmic tradition, it is only because, in the history of Indian thought,

the word *'dharma'* came to be applied indiscriminately to all manners of things. The problem however, is not one of semantics but of substance. The concerns of *dharma,* as that order in which all life is sustained, conflicts reconciled, bitterness overcome, and disharmonies, dissolved, are concerns to which at all times a nation must be subordinate. It is *dharma* which is sovereign, not nation. Guruji speaks of *dharma* as sovereign; and then proceeds to turn 'nation' into an absolute value, 'the living God'. In the next step he perceives the Indian nation as only the Hindu nation. The result is that, speaking on the one hand of how we should try to identify our joys and sorrows with an ever-increasing circle of men and thus expand our being, he narrows that ideal on the other hand, at any rate in its social expression, to Hindu society. Talking of the 'Great Unifying Principle' of the Hindus, he bases the agenda of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on the great dividing principle of we and they.

(7) The explanation for that lies, 1 think, in the equally startling lack of harmony between the Golwalkar who had achieved completest freedom from personal bitterness and the Golwalkar who let his energies be dominated by the historical bitterness of Hindu humiliation.

(x) (b) Deendayal Upadhyaya

It is, in my view, in the writings and speeches of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, especially those of his later years, that we find a clear departure from Golwalkar's perceptions of India, a shift of emphasis so very fundamental that his vision of future India is not that of Hindu India. Deendayal Upadhyaya was born on 25 September 1916, at Dhanakiya, a small village situated on the Jaipur-Ajrner rail route, his father a railway station master, like his grandfather. After his studies he dedicated his life to the Sangh. He was one of those few eminent

men of the RSS whose investigations into the real nature of Indian civilisation, and the problems that arose from its encounter with British rule, had a sound intellectual discipline. After the formation of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh in 1951, he became one of its General-Secretaries, and early in January 1968 its President. Although the Jan Sangh set out as a political party, its intimate connection with the RSS remained, for not a few of its leaders came from the Sangh family,[373] and retained its outlook. When Deendayal Upadhyaya died on 11 February 1968, ironically, during a train journey, his body found sprawling on one of the train tracks of the Mughalsarai railway station yard, there was a commonly shared public grief, and a unanimous perception of him as a truly great man, which the Marxists shared. In fact he was very nearly a saint.For he had achieved freedom not only from personal bitterness but also from the bitterness of collective memories.

His speeches and writings, in Hindi, were published in three collections: *Rashtra Jivan ki Samasyaen,*[374] or 'The Problems of National Life', 1960; *Ekatma Manavavada*[375]*,* or 'Integral Humanism', 1965; and *Rashtra Jivan ki Disha*[376]*,* or 'The Direction of National Life', 1971.

What is the framework of Deendayal Upadhyaya's social and political perceptions concerning India? The essential thing to be observed is that that framework is not of Hindu nationalism. His concerns are undoubtedly still with the Indian nation and its social and economic problems; but those are viewed in the setting of *dharma* and

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373 As Golwalkar mentioned, in a tribute to Shyama Prasad; see *Samagra Darshana,* Vol. 3, pp. 104-6.

374 Lucknow, Rashtradharma Prakashan, 1960. Hereafter, *Samasyaen.*

375 New Delhi, Bharatiya Jan Sangh Central Secretariat, 1965. Hereafter, *Manavavada.*

376 Lucknow, Rashtradharma Prakashan, 1971. Hereafter, *Disha.*

not *Hindutva,* or 'Hindu-ness'. Excepting one place, nowhere else in his speeches and writings, if we consider the three works mentioned above, does he talk of *Hindu-rashtra,* or Hindu nation. He talks of *dharma-rajya* instead. And there is a world of difference between the two conceptions. Nor does he view *dharma* as a 'Hindu' category.

The proposition around which Deendayal Upadhyaya's thoughts revolve, like those of Golwalkar, is that the existence of a nation lies in its distinctive consciousness. It rises or falls in the same degree as that consciousness comes into light or is obscured.[377] But, unlike Golwalkar, who perceives India's consciousness as 'Hindu consciousness', Upadhyaya perceives it as centred in *dharma,*[378] *about* which, however, there are numerous misconceptions. Golwalkar's concern is to make Hindu society united and strong, and since in his view Hindu society is the Indian nation, to make the Hindu nation the chief object of every Hindu's devotion. Deendayal's concern is to bring to light the real nature of Indian consciousness, its citi, as he calls it; for it is only then that one can obtain a satisfactory answer to the question, 'what direction shall India take?'

But what is *dharma* which gives to Indian society its distinctive consciousness, and should give to the Indian nation its direction? He clears the ground by first saying what *dharma* is not.[379] It is not ritualism. It is not a system of rites and ceremonies. It is not to be found necessarily in temple or mosque or church. They are not *dharma* any more than a school is knowledge. They are a medium, but they are that only-a medium. *Dharma* is not a sect, nor a philosophical opinion, nor any one spiritual path. In short, *dharma is* not 'religion'.

377 *Samasyaen,* p.62, pp.70-1, 72-3; *Disha,* p.53, pp.60-1; *Manavavada, p.42-*

378 *Samasyaen,* pp.73-6; *Disha,* pp.96-7, 192-200, 205-6; *Manavavada,* pp.50-3, 56-65.

379 *Manavavada, p.5 1.*

Wrongly translated as 'religion', in the next step all the social disorders which religion in the West produced are quickly attached to *dharma* as well. And just as in the modern West, religion was progressively ousted from the political and economic affairs of nations, the doctrine of secularism taking its place; so also in India, the mention of *dharma* would be dismissed from the public domain, by the secularist leaders of independent India, as medieval religious stuff. That happened because *dharma* was confused with 'religion'; 'Of the very many damages done to us by English translations, this is one of the greatest'.[380]

The fundamental cause of the numerous problems that modem India is faced with lies, according to Deendayal Upadhyaya, in the indiscriminate application of the Western forms of thought to Indian political life, obscuring thereby the true nature of Indian consciousness. The policies that have been advanced after independence reflect, not that consciousness, but one Western ism of another. Far from achieving coherence and harmony of social purpose, the national life of India has been turned into a battle-ground of conflicting economic and political philosophies.[381]

There are, he says, those who regard the means of production alone as the determining social factor; it is in their given ownership and distribution that they see the cause of all disorder, and in their transfer from private to social domain the cure of all social evils. They believe that, as elsewhere in the world, Indian political life must be grounded in purely economic realities, culture and religion being secondary. Socialists and communists constitute this group. Then there are those who look upon political power as the ultimate factor. They assess

380 *Manavavada, p.5 1.*
381 Hereafter references are relating to the paragraph as a whole.

religion, culture, and economics strictly in the light of political considerations. Most of them belong to the Congress which runs the government. Again, there are religious groups who want that India's political and economic policies should be based on their respective religious principles. Religious dogmatists belong to them. And there are those who believe that India's life is in its civilisation, and the chief concern should, therefore, be to preserve it and enhance it. They form a very large part of Indian society, many of them belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and not a few to the Congress as well.[382]

Or, to put it differently, there are, he says, three main groups: one holding the theory of 'one-civilisation'; the second, of 'two - civilisations'; and the third, of 'many-civilisations'. The first group believes that there is in India only one civilisation; does not admit the existence of any other forms of civilisation in India; and, if they do exist, it believes that they should all be assimilated in the one dominant civilisation. `The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is the advocate of this point of view. The group that believes in the 'two-civilisations' theory consists of those who advocate it openly and clearly, as in the Muslim League, contending that the Hindus and the Muslims are two distinct civilisations; and those, as in the Congress, that outwardly reject that theory, but in actual practice try, unsuccessfully, to reconcile one with the other, thus betraying their belief that the two are, after all, really different from one another. Finally, the third group upholds the theory that India is 'many-civilisations', those of different regions, and, applying the doctrine of self-determination, contend that they all are autonomous. The communists and the language-based regionalists form this group. To the communists, it is the unity of economic and material interests that is the main thing, not the mythical unity brought

382 *Samasyaen, pp.2-3.*

about by civilisation. Those who believe in the existence in India of two or many-civilisations are evidently mistaken. But those who rightly believe in the existence of one-civilisation as the substance of the Indian nation can be mistaken about its nature. So we return again to the question, what is the nature of Indian civilisation?[383]

Deendayal Upadliyaya clears the ground further by taking up the question of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. For, he says, it is with that question that India's future is linked, even as that future is linked with India's contribution to mankind. But the first thing to do is to remove the very many crippling misconceptions with which, in the Indian mind, 'nation' and 'nationalism' have come to be surrounded. Nation is not just a political concept, a changing construct of the mind, much less just a territorial concept. Nation is not a collection of the people that have historically lived together; nor is the people, jana, simply a collection of human beings living in a geographical space. Nor is nation just a geographical space. It is not born out of social contract, nor would it die should that contract be abrogated. Nation arises out of a deeper life-force; it is self-created, *swayambhuha.* It has a historical growth, of course, but history alone cannot explain it. Language, culture, literature, are undoubtedly the basic elements of a nation's unity, but they are basic because they reflect something even more fundamental that gives life to a nation-its citi, or consciousness. They are attributes of nation, not its cause. Confusing attributes with cause, the Western thinkers, then, believe that a nation can be created by putting together some how those attributes. That cannot be done, for the common elements of a national life are only expressions of an inherent consciousness at work, which cannot be created artificially by political means. Each nation has its own unique consciousness.

383 *Samaspen, pp.5-6.*

That is what distinguishes it from others. So long as that consciousness, the citi, lives, that nation lives; when it dies, the nation dies. A nation dies, not by the loss of territory, or by decrease in its population; a nation dies when its consciousness ceases to exist. [384]

Deendayal Upadhyaya mentions how the growth of nationalism in Europe meant also the aggression of one nation against another. That was inevitable. In that regard he speaks of the dilemma of Western nations. Should they remove from their minds the thought of their opponents and enemies, they would themselves cease to be. For the very basis of their nationalistic unity would then have been destroyed. But if they continue on the basis of conflict, then their slogan of human unity and peace will come to nothing. This dilemma must arise, he maintains, from the negative perspectives of Western nationalism, which originate in turn, in that characteristic Western world view where human life is seen as perpetual conflict. The Western thinkers perceive every unit of human life as conflicting with one another; when two or more of such units combine, producing a new formation, it is with the purpose of struggling against a more forceful power. It was, he says, in this perspective that Darwin viewed biology, Hegel philosophy, and Marx history. And in that lies the root, also, of those ideas of Nietzsche that were converted into Hitler's Nazism. The economic philosophy of capitalism assumes conflict, and competition to be the unalterable truth and scientific facts of life. Socialism views conflict in its collective and organised forms and advocates a classless society by annihilating one particular class. They all perceive 'nation' either as a useful means or as hindrance. The nationalists, because nationalism helps the struggle they are

384 *Samasyaen,* pp. 56-8, 61-2, 67-71, 72-6, 80-3; *Disha,* pp. 35-41, 45-50, 53-61, 101-8; *Manavavada, pp.* 13, 3", 40-6.

engaged in; those who oppose nationalism, because it can seriously impede their idea of world struggle.[385]

This philosophy of life, he argues, is out of harmony with that cooperation, love and feeling of unity which the Western thinkers wish at the same time to bring about. A conflict-free society cannot be created on the basis of a philosophy which assigns primacy to the principle of conflict. For if it were true that human nature, or life itself is rooted in conflict, and man's every instinct is to survive by subjugating others, then nothing could make him live for others, or love others. When he must, he would do so only as a policy, an expedient, and not as a natural part of his being. If we want to keep the world from being destroyed, we would have to change such a philosophy of life. That is because the whole creation is based on harmony and not on conflict. In case there is a force at work in the universe, and in human consciousness, then that force is without doubt creative, unified, and positive; neither destructive, nor divisive.[386]

Deendayal Upadhyaya advances the thesis that the traditional Indian perspective on nation and nationality is born out of a world view in which, giving primacy to creative harmony, everything is seen as connected with everything else. The individual, having his distinct existence, his legitimate self-interest, and desires and pursuit of happiness, fulfills himself in the larger life of society: society derives the meaning of its existence from the still larger life of the nation: the nation finds its ultimate fulfilment in serving the universal interests of mankind. All these units of life are interconnected, not in a hierarchy, but in a natural, innate, inviolable simultaneity of reverence for life. Here the law is not conflict and competition for the mastery of the

385 *Samasyaen, pp. 77-8.*
386 *Samasyaen, pp. 78-82.*

world, but harmony and co-operation, and ultimately the mastery of the self. For the first condition of human happiness is the mastery of the self.[387]

These, according to Upadhyaya, constitute the ideals of traditional Indian national life. They form the Indian consciousness, its underlying life-force, the purpose of its existence-its citi. That consciousness finds its clearest expression in *dharma,* which is the sustaining force of all civilised life, indeed of all life. *Dharma* is the vital impulse, the life-breath, of Indian civilisation. The one ideal that India has kept before itself, through the numerous vicissitudes of its existence through centuries is-respectful acceptance of the diverse forms in which life expresses itself.

After saying what *dharma* is not, Deendayal Upadhyaya, in the major part of his three works that we are considering here, gives an exposition of what *dharma* is. He then applies it to the social problems of India today. He recalls the classical definition of *dharma* as that force which sustains, upholds. *Dharma is* everything which has that characteristic. It follows that it is only when the legal and the political arrangements adopted by post-independent India will have that characteristic, that they will have any creative moral force. He maintains that the State exists for the sake of the nation, and not the nation for the sake of the State. Similarly, the nation is not a means of achieving political ends; rather, policies shall have the one aim of strengthening the nation, and shall express a nation's deeper consciousness, the purpose of its existence. The people will, rightly, decide who will govern; but neither those who are thus elected to govern, nor the people, can determine what principles will govern such governance; that can be determined by *dharma* alone. Governments are elected by the will of the majority; but what truth

387 *Samasyaen, pp. 79-81, 82.*

is, what justice is, cannot be determined by the majority; those can be determined only by *dharma. In* short, neither the State, nor the majority of the people, nor the government, is sovereign. The force that is sovereign above them all is *dharma.* This is the essence of Deendayal Upadhyaya's understanding of traditional Indian thought. [388]

It is from this understanding that arise his critique of the prevalent political ideas and policies and his vision of the future India.

He makes some obvious criticisms: that Indian politics has turned into a free hunting ground for the unscrupulous, the opportunists, and the unprincipled; that the disorder of today is caused, first of all, by the lack of knowledge as regards the goal and direction of the national life; and complete disregard for Indian consciousness. His aim, however, is not to compile a list of all that is wrong with Indian polity today. Rather, his concern is to battle with that one fundamental error of perception in which all the ills of Indian society originate.

That error, Deendayal Upadliyaya points out, lies in adopting a fragmented view of social reality, which leads to dividing what in reality are integrated and interdependent social units. Liberal individualism and socialism alike, he says, are rooted in a view of the world where the individual is fragmented from society, on the underlying assumption, assumed to be *the* truth of human existence, that there is an innate conflict between the two, and that that conflict is permanent. From this follows the political philosophy of the two separate domains, the individual and the social, and then the theory of separate *rights. This* fundamental error, he says, runs through also the prevalent Indian political thinking.

But Indian thought, he maintains, has never seen the individual and society as two conflicting and colliding entities. Neither has it

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388 *Samasyaen, pp.* 65-6, 74-6; *Disha, pp.* 49-50, 53-5, p.201; *Manavavada,* p.50, pp. 60-2, 62-3.

ever seen them in their separateness. One has no existence apart from the other; the two are inseparable. The Western nations have divided themselves in two principal opposite camps: those that uphold the primacy of the individual and subordinate society to the interests of the individual; and those that uphold the primacy of society, and subordinate the individual to collective social interests. Both these views are one-sided, and must produce profound disorder. Indian thought has throughout its history looked upon the individual and society as an indivisible unity. Both have their distinct requirements, which can be fulfilled, not in the subjugation of the one to the other, but in their interdependence. At the same time this interdependence is not a mean state, one of helpless dependence; rather, in the Indian conception, it is a state of mutual harmony, where one is not seen as a threat to the other, but as the natural part of one's growth. Deendayal emphasises the truth that higher than even interdependence is the state of 'inter-harmony', or 'interagreeableness'. In dependence, there is little dignity; in inter-dependence, there is genuine self-respect. It is only in a social order where this mutual-harmony, or mutual--agreeableness, is the guiding principle of social and individual relationships, that true freedom is obtained for man. But only he can be agreeable who in his own being is independent. The true meaning of freedom is the freedom to be in harmony with others. It is the freedom to summon one's inherent physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual powers in the service of one's own self and of others. This, then, is the meaning of *dharma;* and *dharma* is the link which binds the individual and the social in an integral unity of humanness.[389]

It was this world view that secured the foundation of the varnasystem, the Indian social order, in which there was perfect equality among all the different parts of society. 'Me causes of the degeneration

389 *Disha, pp. 113-6, 121-2, 127-30, 132-4; Manavavada, pp. 47-8.*

of that system lie not in the conception itself but in human pride and selfishness. The agenda of future India must lie, Deendayal Upadhyaya suggests, in overcoming social disorder, which can be achieved only when India has regained its self. That self lives in its abiding faith in the truth that no social order can survive on the basis of inequality and division. There is diversity in nature; but diversity is not inequality; nor is diversity division. Inequality and divisiveness can only destroy human worth, not uphold it. What can uphold and sustain is *dharma.* Hence his vision of future India is *dharma-rajya,* which is not a theocratic state, nor is there in it inequality and division.

From these traditional philosophical principles of Indian civilisation he derives the political and economic contents of *dharma-rajya.* Set forth, with perfect clarity of principle and practical details,[390] they are as follows:

a. Assurance to each individual of a minimum living standard, which will imply an assured opportunity to every able-bodied individual of purposeful employment.

b. Beyond these, such increasing prosperity that will offer the means, to the individual and to the nation, to enable them to contribute, in the light of their distinctive consciousness, citi, to the progress of the world.

c. Taking into account the productive potential of the nation, to develop appropriate technology; to husband the natural resources; and to arrange for the safety of the country.

d. The question of ownership of different industries, whether it shall be with the individual, or the State, or any other organisation, shall be decided on the basis of what is most practical.

390 *Samasyaen, pp. 83-7; Disha, pp. 193-207; Manavavada, pp. 78-83.*

e. The order, advocated above, should be such that in no way must it disregard man; be an instrument of his full development; and protect cultural and other life values of Indian society. This is that protective line which in no circumstances must the economic order transgress.

In Pandit Deendayal's *dharma-rajya* there will have to be, besides, free education for everybody. It is inconceivable, education of the people being in the greatest interest of society, that anybody should have to pay to get himself or herself educated; or, if unable to pay, remain uneducated. Education in traditional India was always free. That was the case, until 1947, in Indian states as well. Primary and higher education shall be a charge on the nation. It is equally inconceivable, he says, that people should have to pay for medical treatment, which, like education, will have to be made available, free, to everybody. Health and education will be, in *dharma-rajya,* the two primary concerns of society.[391]

If two words are required to indicate the direction in which Indian polity should move, they are, he says: de-centralisation, and self reliance. Diversity, he says, is an inestimable gift of nature: Indian life, like nature, has been immensely diverse, where life has expressed itself in different colours, sounds, textures. This excessive veneration for centralising every social and economic function in one authority can produce only disorder, for it will be against life itself. Authority must be dispersed, so long as the different centres of authority, and initiative, are all held together by *dharma.* Similarly, self-reliance must take the place of this pathetic dependence on what is foreign, in practically every field, in thinking, social arrangements, methods, capital, the ways of production, technology, and standards of consumption. This dependence on the others cannot be the way of

391 *Manavavada, pp. 72-3*

progress. But neither does it mean that India blindly follows only that which is ancient. Many old institutions will change and the new ones take their place.[392]

Finally, Pandit Deendayal advocates the thesis that *dharma* does not lie either in the rule of the majority or even in the people. *Dharma is* eternal. It is not sufficient, therefore, that democracy be understood only as the rule, of the people; it must also be a rule for the good of the people. What the good of the people consists in can be determined only by *dharma.* Hence democracy will have to be also *dharma-rajya,* the rule of *dharma.* True democracy is only that where both freedom and *dharma* combine.

(xi) The Two Jawaharlal Nehrus

This review of the Indian perceptions of India may be concluded by having a quick look at the perceptions of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru whose role in the events leading to the partition of India has been nearly as controversial as has been the direction that he gave to the Indian nation as its first Prime Minister from 1947 to 1964, the year in which he died. We are concerned here not with his politics but with the assumptions, the intellectual foundations, on which he based his understanding of Indian society and its future, from which followed the policies of the Government of independent India.

There were two Nehrus: the Jawaharlal of 1933, who wrote *Whither India?,* published as a series of articles in the Indian press on 9-11 October of that year, and the Jawaharlal of 195 8, who wrote *The Basic Approach,* published in the *A.I.C.C. Economic Review of*

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392 *Manavavada, pp.* 82-3; particularly, see *Disha, pp. 149-54;* and *Samasyaen, pp. 41-4, 45-51.*

August 15.[393] Intellectually and emotionally, the later Nehru was as different from the earlier man, although not quite as radically so, as the Manabendra Nath Roy of *India in Transition* had been from the Roy of *India: Her Past, Present and Future.*

The interesting thing is that the later Jawaharlal, of 1958, had beliefs more akin to the earlier Roy, of 1918, that Indian society can best be raised on that inner unity of all life, the divine impulse, or life force, that pervades the universe, as seen in the Vedanta. But the earlier Jawaharlal, of 1933, had very nearly the same assumptions which the later Roy of the Marxist phase had, that Hindu nationalism is the force of reaction, employed to keep the masses ignorant and oppressed, that India's struggle to obtain freedom from British rule is part of the great struggle which is going on all over the world for the emancipation of peasants and workers and that socialism is the only future for India, as it is for the world.

In the same year in which Nehru wrote *Whither India?,* 1933, soon after his release from prison, he had written a series of letters, while he was in prison from October 1930 to August 1933, to his young daughter Indira, so as to educate her in the history of India and the world, and in the philosophy of the Indian nationalist movement of course. They were published in 1934 as *Glimpses of World History,* with a 'Preface' by him.

In his letter of 14 May 1933[394] he tells her how there were three different varieties of nationalism at work in India, the first two being

393 1 am indebted to Dr Ravinder Kumar, Director, the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, for suggesting these two documents as containing the essence of Nehru's perceptions of India, and for providing me with a copy of each. For *Whither India?,* see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru;* ed. S. Gopal, (Orient Longman, New Delhi; 1974), Vol. VI, pp. 1-32.

394 *Glimpses of World History* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, reprinted 1967), pp. 744-51.

Hindu nationalism and the nationalism of the Muslims. Of these, Nehru says, Muslim nationalism was not 'true nationalism', because it had at the same time religious international loyalties. It was difficult to draw a sharp line between Hindu nationalism and true nationalism, for 'The two overlapped, as India is the only home of the Hindus and they form a majority there. It was thus easier for the Hindus to appear as full-blooded nationalists than for the Muslims, although each stood' for his own particular brand of nationalism'.[395] Nehru characterised, them, dismissively, as 'religious and communal',[396] without examining what possible meaning could there be in his attaching the word communal' to them as their main attribute. This introduced into Indian perceptions much confusion. For now the assumption was that any agenda that was Hindu, or Muslim, was communal; and, to Jawaharlal, what was communal, the word itself had a bad smell. He further assumed that what was 'communal' was always 'religious', and would thereafter use the two words together, 'religious and communal'. He would see in them the main problem of Indian society, and would separate them from 'true nationalism'.

But what 'true nationalism, or what he also called 'real or Indian nationalism''[397] was he never really defined. He simply put that undefined entity in opposition to Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism. Since these two were 'religious and communal', Indian nationalism 'strictly speaking, was the only form which could be called nationalism in the modem sense of the word''[398] Nehru argued. In that case, his argument ought to have been, not that they were religious and communal, but that they were no nationalism at all, and he should have then proceeded to show how the assumptions on

395 Ibid, p.745.
396 Ibid, p.745.
397 Ibid, p.745.
398 Ibid, p.745.

which they were based were false, and that 'real', or 'true', nationalism in India was Indian nationalism, to which he ought to have given not just a name but substance.

Nehru mentioned also 'a third type of sectional nationalism'-Sikh nationalism.[399] He says that although 'In the past the dividing line between the Sikhs and the Hindus had been rather vague', one effect of the national awakening was that it 'also shook up the virile Sikhs, and they began to work for a more distinct and separate existence.,[400] Nehru's theory is that 'The bulk of them were peasant proprietors in the Punjab, and they felt themselves menaced by the town bankers and other city interests. This was the real motive behind their desire for a separate group recognition.'[401] He says that in the beginning it took the form of agitating for 'the possession of property belonging to shrines', and 'came into conflict with the Government over this', but later they 'turned to the political field and rivalled the other communal groups in making extreme demands for themselves.'[402]

Nehru now talked of 'Hindu and Muslim and Sikh nationalisms'.[403] Besides calling them 'religious and communal', he characterised them, in a muddle of political vocabulary, 'group nationalism"[404] implying that the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs were not even communities but 'groups'. In his view 'Non-co-operation had stiffed up India thoroughly, and the first results of this shaking up were these group awakenings'.[405] This is even chronologically not correct. For Hindu nationalism was being advocated by Tilak and the earlier Aurobindo

399 Ibid, p.747.
400 Ibid, p.747.
401 Ibid, p.747.
402 Ibid, p.747.
403 Ibid, p.747.
404 Ibid, p.747.
405 Ibid, p.747.

for at least two decades earlier. Its philosophical and emotional foundations had already been laid by very many people by the end of the nineteenth century. Muslim nationalism was to grow from what Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was telling the Indian Muslims soon after the events of 1857; and its premises were clear in the birth of the Muslim League in 1906 at Dacca.

Nehru spoke also of 'many other smaller groups which gained selfconsciousness', and mentioned the so-called 'Depressed Classes'.[406] 'These people', he said, 'long suppressed by the upper-class Hindus, were chiefly the landless labourers in the fields. It was natural that when they gained self-consciousness a desire to get rid of their many disabilities should possess them and a bitter anger against those Hindus who had for centuries oppressed them.'[407] Just around that time Bhimrao Ambedkar was arguing, as we saw earlier, that the Depressed Classes were not a small group but constituted the largest part of Indian society, a part that produced also the most substantial portion of national wealth but were treated inhumanly.

Nehru concluded that 'Each awakened group looked at nationalism and patriotism in the light of its own interests':[408] 'The demands of the Muslim communal leaders were such as to knock the bottom out of all hope of true national unity in India. To combat them on their own communal lines, Hindu communal organizations grew into prominence. Posing as true nationalists, they were as sectarian and narrow as others':[409] 'and, inevitably, there was conflict.'[410] 'As inter communal bitterness increased, the more extreme communal leaders

406 Ibid, p.747.
407 Ibid, p.747.
408 Ibid, p.747.
409 Ibid, p.746.
410 Ibid, p.746.

of each group came to the front':[411] 'The conflict was aggravated in a variety of ways by the Government, especially by their encouraging the more-extreme communal leaders,:[412] 'So the poison went on spreading, and we seemed to be in a vicious circle from which there was no obvious way out.'

M.N. Roy had complained, as we saw, that the most outstanding feature of the Indian national movement has been its lack of theoretical foundation: some twelve years later, Nehru found the same lack. 'It is worthwhile therefore to clear our minds of all the tangled webs that may have grown there', he pleaded, 'and go back a little to basic facts and principles'; for 'Right action cannot come out of nothing; it must be preceded by thought.' The principles which the earlier Nehru invoked, and the concerns which determined his view of future India, were not of nationalism but of socialism.

With the foregoing assumptions firmly embedded in his mind, Jawaharlal asked: 'What exactly do we want? And why do we want it, the same two questions which Roy had asked, in 1922, in his *What Do We Want.* 'Whither India?', the earlier Nehru asked.´Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation.' To this he added, in the course of the debate that followed the publication of his article *Whither India?,* the following proposals. 'I want to increase the wealth of India and the standards of living of the Indian people and it seems to me that this can only be done by the application of science to industry resulting in large scale industrialisation'; 'I believe in industrialisation and the big machine.' He proposed that the caste system is only a petrified form

411 Ibid, p.747.
412 Ibid, pp.747-8.

of class division and must be done away with. So far as religion is concerned, he proposed that it should be a personal affair and must not interfere in political or economic questions.

The earlier Nehru had completely rejected the premises on which, in his *Hind Swaraj, 1909,* Gandhi had based his vision of future India. Gandhi maintained till the last day of his life that India must not follow the ways of Western civilisation. 'That is because, he argued, modem Western civilisation is based on industrialism, which by its very nature is raised on violence to the individual, and whatever is raised on violence can produce only evil. Instead, Gandhi talked of *RamaRajya* as an ideal system of social relationships.

In his letter of 11 January *1928* Jawaharlal was telling Gandhi: 'You misjudge greatly, I think, the civilisation of the West'; 'I certainly disagree with this viewpoint and I neither think that the so - called Ram Raj was very good in the past, nor do I want it back. I think that Western or rather industrial civilization is bound to conquer India, maybe with many changes and adaptations, but none the less, in the main, based on industrialism.'

A week later, on 17 January, Gandhi replied to Nehru, saying: 'The differences between you and me appear to me to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us'; 'I see quite clearly that you must carry on open warfare against me and my views.' But, Gandhi added, 'I suggest a dignified way of unfurling your banner. Write to me a letter for publication showing your differences. I will print it in Young *India* and write a brief reply.' Nehru did not do that. And the socialists within the Congress party continued to attack Gandhi.

In *1918* M. N. Roy had advocated the Vedanta as the highest philosophy of life. 'This concept of the unity of the universe, the realization of the identity of the individual with cosmic existence, is India's contribution to the progress of humanity', he had then

believed. All this would soon be superseded by his passion for Marxism and communism. By 1946 he would abandon that passion and develop his philosophy of Radical Humanism. It was Roy, more than India, who was in transition.

His biographer, and also an intimate colleague during the later part of his life, Sibnarayan Ray, tells us: 'the misgivings about the ruthless pursuit of power and suppression of intellectual freedom which had arisen in his mind in consequence of his personal experience in the late 1920s, and the subsequent revelations of the ugly features of the Bolshevik regime during the 1930s and early 1940s gradually undermined his faith in the moral and the intellectual soundness of communism as an ideology'. Roy now believed that 'Freedom for the common man had become even more remote under the dictatorship of the Party than in the bourgeois democracies'. Sibnarayan says: 'Rejecting then nationalism, bourgeois democracy and communism, Roy now searched for a new body of principles which would both explain historic processes and provide guidelines for a restructuring of society towards freedom and justice in an increasing manner in the fives of the common people.' [413]

Jawaharlal was on a similar path by 1958. In *The Basic Approach* he had abandoned every one of the main theses he had propounded in *Whither India?*. The chief elements of Gandhi's vision of future India were now also what constituted Nehru's profoundly changed perceptions.

The second Nehru now believed, with Gandhi, that Western economics has little bearing on India's present-day problems. We have to do 'our own thinking', to find a path suited 'to our own conditions'. Communism has allied itself to the approach of violence: its language is of violence; its thought is violent. Violence cannot

413 *Op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 43-4.*

possibly lead to a solution of any major problem. Wrong means will not lead to right results; and this is no longer merely an ethical doctrine but a practical proposition. There has got to be a moral and spiritual approach to human problems; materialistic considerations alone will not do. The law of life should not be competition, nor acquisitiveness, but cooperation, the good of each contributing to the good of all. In such a society, the emphasis will be on duties, not on rights; the rights will follow the performance of the duties. It is the quality of human being that ultimately counts. The touchstone should be how far any political or social theory enables the individual to rise above his petty self and thus think in terms of the good of all. We have to give a new direction to education and evolve a new type of humanity. This leads us to the Vedantic conception that everything finds a place in the organic whole; everything has a spark of the divine impulse. This might help us to get rid of our narrowness of race, caste or class and make us more tolerant and understanding. These are Nehru's own words.

But these were the very propositions, all in the framework of Hindu nationalism of course, which were being advanced by Madhav Golwalkar as well. Earlier having seen him as a communalist, because he was talking of India as a Hindu nation, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh as a communal organisation, because it was working to restore to Hindu society its disturbed unity, the later Nehru should have clearly acknowledged that he was now of the same mind as Golwalkar as regards the basic principles for which he had little use earlier.

Nehru did not quite do that. Nor did he acknowledge his debt to the Mahatma. This failure had a crucial bearing on the policies which, with Nehru as Prime Minister, were being followed by the Government. For those were mostly based on the theses he had advanced in 1933, but had now abandoned, but without replacing

their intellectual premises with those he came to profess in 1958. This meant that those policies continued, with assumptions he no longer believed in, and what he now believed in was of little consequence for official India.

Neither did the later Nehru break the mould of political debate which he had himself created, and which was always profoundly misleading. Not the least part of that language is the assumed conflict between communalism and secularism, perceived also as a central issue in modem India. In this there has been a confusion of terms, from which has arisen the confusion of perceptions. Properly speaking, the conflict can be between communalism and nationalism, between the limited interests of a community and the larger interests of the nation, and not between communalism and secularism, for it is not to community that secularism is opposed but to organised religion. It is entirely conceivable that, in being communal, a viewpoint may still be quite secular.

But the political debate in India has centred on communalism v/s secularism. At no point of time was any serious effort made to examine what precisely did these words connote in the Indian context. It was assumed, by Jawaharlal Nehru most of all, that there existed, corresponding to the words 'communalism' and 'secularism', a state of mind and a social situation in India. This assumption, on which many State policies were based, was not only wrong but also dangerous. It did not describe a situation, but created it.

With the publication of *Basic Approach,* the debate ought to have shifted from the controversy of communalism vs secularism to asking the question: what, indeed, is the *swa,* or 'one's-own', of Indian civilisation, its distinctive nature, in the light of which must India build its future? And it is about *this* that there have been huge misconceptions, in which lie the roots of Indian violence.

The foregoing review has left out several eminent persons. For instance, on the side of socialist thinking, Acharya Narendra Deva (1889-1956), Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-79), and Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-67). On the side of tradition, it leaves out Swami Karapatri, whose *Marx-vada aur Ramarajya,* or 'Marxism and Ramarajya', originally composed in Sanskrit and then translated into Hindi,[414] is an account first of the main direction of Western philosophy up to Marx, followed by a critique, eminently logical and rational, of Marx's philosophy of history, of the concepts of historical materialism, class struggle, and relations of production, of the Marxian social and economic order, and Marx's general world view, counter-posing to Marxism the Indian view of social order, which Karapatri simply calls *Ramarajya.* But his *Ramarajya is* not a product *of Hindutva;* he never uses the word 'Hindu' in his work. It has no religious presuppositions. A great deal more requires to be said about the perceptions which Tilak had of India and the West and of their philosophical foundations. They were expressed chiefly in his Gita*Rahasya,*[415] where he discusses the radically different orientation which Indian and Western philosophers had towards the problem of material reality, human nature, pain and pleasure, virtue, duty, and individualism. Very much more requires to be stated as regards the self-perceptions which the Indian Muslims had of themselves as a part of Indian society, which were not just a copy of the perceptions of Muslim political leadership.

There is, moreover, the whole field of academic scholarship. The perceptions of those who had had immense influence on the social and political life of India at different periods of the past one hundred and fifty years were mostly derived from the researches that were being

414 Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1957.
415 Poona, 1915.

done, by Western and Indian scholars alle, in the character of Indian society and its history. Some of those, like Tilak and Aurobindo, who influenced political developments in India, had also contributed to scholarly investigations into India's past. Sri Aurobindo's *The Foundations of Indian Culture* is a major work.[416] A detailed review is, therefore, required of the direction, and the intellectual framework, of the studies of India by Indian scholars-philosophers, historians, scientists, jurists, anthropologists, and sociologists. Its necessity is emphasised even more by the fact, which some may question, that Indian policy-makers-politicians, civil servants, and advisers to the Government-are either directly influenced by some theory or the other put forth in academic works on India, and base on them their prescriptions of Indian ills: or their intellectual debt remains unacknowledged, perhaps even to themselves, but the conclusions of academic research, mostly West-oriented in its method and content, find their way, in one form or another, in social legislation and other public policies.

Besides, the Indian perceptions of India are reflected in modem Indian literature, especially in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and Malayalam. Its most creative part was engaged with the agonising problem of re-assessing Indian life and its standards in the wake of the challenge which British rule, and with it Western civilisation, had posed. The disruption it had caused in human relationships was a major theme. Their re-examination involved a certain perception of Western life and relationships, especially between man and woman. In this, as in academic research, the Indian mind was divided. There was, on the one hand, the irresistible appeal of the Western ways of life-seemingly progressive, scientific, and liberating; and, on the

416 Sri Aurobindo Library, New York City, 1953; first Indian edition, Pondicherry, 1959. It comprises the series of articles which originally appeared in the quarterly review *Arya* from December 1918 to January 1921.

other, of tradition and its eternal forms. The story of modem India is the story of that division; and it is best told in its literature. Without it any review of the Indian perceptions of India will remain incomplete.

The aim, however, is not to catalogue the various Indian perceptions of India, but primarily to grasp the nature of the mental framework in which they arise, and assess, apart from the limits of the individual perceptions, the value of the framework itself. Leaving out the material indicated above, the present review provides, nonetheless, a firm basis for drawing certain main conclusions, in that regard. They are as follows:

(xii) Some Main Conclusions

(i) The Indian perceptions of India are divided into two main streams: the one that adopted the Western perceptions of India; and the other that saw India in terms of the Indian categories of thought, which it presented as Hindu thought.

(ii) Of the two, the first stream is composed of Indian liberals, reformers, socialists and communists, and those not politically minded but influenced by modem science and rationalistic philosophy. This was the stream of Western liberalism, Marxism, and Humanism. Those whose avowed aim was to Westernise India, to mention only the ones that are discussed in this review, are Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Ranade, Bhimrao Ambedkar, M.N. Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, D.D. Kosambi, and Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. The stream flowing, *apparently,* in an opposite direction, was composed of the perceptions of Dayananda, Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Madhav Golwalkar, and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. That is the stream of Hindu tradition in which, they contended, India must flow if it were to remain faithful to its genius, its own-nature, and not lose itself in Western modernity.

(iii) In each of the two streams there were some major shifts. As in the case of M.N. Roy, the later Jawaharlal, and Deendayal Upadhyaya, they no longer flow in the stream in the formation of which they had played such a notable part. Roy renounces communism for having become a brutal dictatorship and with it Marxism; and, in search of a more satisfying human order, propounds what he called Radical Humanism. By 1958 Jawaharlal ceases to -be a socialist; declares the language of communism to be the language of violence; agrees that the Indian problems cannot be solved by Western economics; and talks of Vedanta. The later Aurobindo's concerns were neither Hinduism nor Indian polity, but how to prepare mankind to move to an altogether new level of human existence, that of Super consciousness, the Life Divine. Deendayal Upadhyaya shifts from the Hindu nationalism of Golwalkar and invokes *dharma* as the foundation of all human order, and sees the future India as a *dharma*rajya.

(iv) There were, besides, destructive ambiguities in the stated perceptions of both kinds. *(a)* Mahadev Govind Ranade would say at one time that India must evolve away from its traditions, for the Indian ills are to be traced to them, and then say in the next moment that Indian society must not break away from its past, for it was a glorious past, and propound in the same speech two absolutely different sets of principles, one derived from England, the other from traditional India. It was not in the least clear what his real views were.This created, not social change, but a false universe of discourse, and with it humbug and hypocrisy. That this was the case was proved by Ranade and Gokhale themselves. When Ranade's first wife died, everybody expected that if he would marry again, he would, being a resolute champion of widow-remarriage and a crusader for the abolition of child-marriage, marry a widow and an adult. He did neither. He married, 'just about a month since he had lost his first wife', and was

himself thirty-two, a girl who was barely eleven years old.[417] Criticised even at that time for hypocrisy, he publicly offered an alibi, namely, it was his father's wish that he should so marry, and he would not disobey his father.[418]

(b) Just at the time that Gokhale was advocating the urgent need to free India from 'the thraldom of old-world ideas', he was getting a Dharwar astrologer, Shankar Shastri, prepare for him, the hour-by-hour, day-by-day, week-by-week, and month-by-month charts of prediction from his horoscope,[419] which he would then invariably consult before undertaking any political work. Indeed, he had had a horoscope prepared for his Servants of India Society as well.[420] This is by no means the only instance. Gokhale's life was full of instances which would prove that he *believed* in those 'old world ideas' which he was condemning in public, and did not believe in the principles of Western civilisation he was so eloquently putting forth as the foundations of future India. For example, Gokhale believed that 'the wife should devote herself wholly to the service of the husband and consider this as the fulfilment of her life'. He applauded this as 'a special characteristic of the women of the East and particularly of India'----the fruit of the culture and tradition of thousands of years'.[421]

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417 See Rarnabai Ranade, (1862-1924) *Amachya Ayushatil kahi Athavani* (tr. Kusurnavati Deshpande, *Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscences,* Publications Division, Govermnent of India; Marathi original published in 19 10, with a preface by Gopal Krishna Gokhale; (English *tr.* 1963), p. 32 of English tr.

418 Ibid, p. 32.

419 To be found in *Gokhale Papers,* File 605, 605-3 to 605-7, at the National Archives of India.

420 *Gokhale Papers,* 605-4.

421 See his 'Preface', dated 20 April 1910, to Ramabai Ranade's *Reminiscences, p.11*

(c) Nehru's commitment to socialism was profoundly ambiguous at all times.[422] So was his position on nationalism. In the last years of his life he sought peace that passeth all understanding, in the company of the great Bengali mystic Ma Anand Mayi. But that debt remained also unacknowledged.

(d) The Bengali Marxist professes dialectical materialism-but, his deepest emotions involved, he also adores Rabindranath Thakur, among the greatest of mystic poets the world has known.

(v) There were, moreover, cross-currents in each of the two streams, sometimes strong, at other times subdued, which make the picture even more complicated. The earlier Jawaharlal does not oppose Gandhi publicly, although Gandhi honestly advises him to do so, since the differences between them are radical, but undermines him, and, the Mahatma gone, does so completely as the first prime minister of free India. M.N. Roy despises Nehru's understanding of socialism. The communists flow along with Nehru for tactical reasons; for he was, after all, against Hindu nationalism and any talk of spiritual India. The Indian communists would soon denounce M.N. Roy, the founder of communism in India, in a most vituperative language. The Indian socialists were never a homogeneous group. The Indian communists break up in some six Marxist churches, bitterly hostile to each other. Bhimrao Ambedkar, with thousands of his followers, embraces Buddhism, not Western Christianity or Islam, nor any Western ism. The stream of Hinduism carried a like Dayananda and his orthodox opponents. It had Vivekananda, with the education of Indian masses as his concern, and the Sankaracharya of Puri, whose concern was to protect cows from being slaughtered, for

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422 On this see, for example, Dietmar Rothermund, *The Phases of Indian Nationalism & Other Essays* (Nachiketa Publications, Bombay, 1970), the essay entitled 'Nehru and Early Indian Socialism', pp. 65-78.

he believed that the cow is the mother of the Hindus, and that Hinduism resides in the cow.

(vi) The stream with the Westernisation of India as its ultimate destination, whether of the liberal or socialist variety, was in actual fact not one single stream at all, although outwardly it gave the impression of being so. However, in the same degree as the confusion grew as to what precisely did the Westernisation of India mean, and whether traditional India would disappear gradually under the combined impact of science, technology and industrialisation; what also grew was a common vocabulary, with 'secularism', 'development', 'equality', 'progress', 'scientific rationality', 'social change', and 'Indian renaissance' as its chief elements-and battle drums. But the underlying postulates of that vocabulary, the postulates of modernity, remained unexamined in India, even when each one of them began to be examined seriously, in search of their truth, in the West itself. What seemed to be common in this stream was a fierce attack on tradition.

(vii) Neither was the stream of Hinduism, or tradition, one homogeneous strewn. What was common was an equally fierce attack on the agenda of Westernisation, and mostly on Western civilisation itself. But to the questions: what is Hinduism? What is the history of Indian social order? there were as many conflicting answers as there were advocates of tradition and Hinduism. Here, too, arose a common vocabulary, however; all the elements of which combined in the idea of *Hindutva* and of Hindu nationalism. They remain equally unexamined.

(viii) Both these vocabularies, two languages, of social and political discussion in India have another feature in common. With some exceptions, neither of them raises in a systematic manner the one central question: what were the concerns of Indian civilisation? Nor do they ask the question: what were the concerns of Western civilisation?

Not doctrines, and theories, but concerns. The evident result is that the Indian advocates of Westernisation have as little understanding of Western civilisation, which they say India must emulate, as they have of Indian civilisation, which they want to see replaced. The advocates of Hinduism have no deeper understanding of Indian civilisation, which they idealise, than they have of Western civilisation, which they reject. The two vocabularies lead not to understanding but to uncritical attack and to an equally uncritical response. There has been progress neither of argument nor of substance.

(ix) Further, what both sides display in- common, with few exceptions, is their method of selective history, and selective texts. They fragment from the totality of history; they fragment from the totality of thought; then they complain against what they have misrepresented so very grievously. Ambedkar concludes, in a language of absolute certainty, that Hinduism is not religion but a social order, and by its very nature is the enemy of human dignity and freedom. He therefore vows to annihilate Hinduism. To prove his charge he compiles what looks like the entire history of the caste system but is evidently selective. His recital of texts is selective likewise. He leaves out all such facts and texts that will destroy his thesis. His principles of social reconstruction are *Equality, Liberty,* and *Fraternity.* But he asks no question as to the history of these very concepts even in France after the Revolution of 1789, or elsewhere in the West. Nowhere in the entire voluminous body of his works does he raise any critical question concerning the state of Western society from which he draws his inspiration. Nor does he seem to be aware of the numerous Western scholars and thinkers who do. This is true of the Indian liberals, especially Gokhale and Ranade.

(a) Damodar Kosambi excluded, this is true also of the Indian Marxists, which at first sight must appear altogether strange; for

history is the fundamental category of Marxian thought. But the Marxian concern with history has always been in the framework of a certain definition of it; whatever did not answer that definition was either 'not history' or, keeping that definition always inviolable, an explanation had to be found somehow-and it was. Engels had noticed that tendency in the Marxists and had warned against it.[423] He even said, 'The materialist conception of history has a lot of dangerous friends nowadays who use it as an excuse for not studying history. Just as Marx, commenting on the French "Marxists" of the late seventies used to say: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist.-[424]

(b) Most of all it is true of Jawaharlal Nehru, whose understanding of history was without question more romanticist than historical, and, as Kosambi pointed out in his review of Nehru's *The Discovery of India,* was characterised by the total absence of the question: why?

423 Engels to Joseph Bloch, 21(22) September 1890. 'According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic factor is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase'. 'Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle *vis-a-vis* our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to give their due to the other factors involved in the interaction'. 'Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a new theory and pan apply it without more ado as soon as they have assimilated its main principles, and even those not always correctly. And T cannot exempt many of the more recent "Marxists" from this approach, for the most amazing stuff has been produced in that quarter, too'. *Selected Correspondence,* pp. 394-6.

424 Engels to Conrad Schmidt, 5 August 1890, *Selected Correspondence, p. 393.* See the whole letter.

(c) Swami Dayananda's commentaries on the Bible and the Quran, contained in his *Satyartha Prakas,*[425] belong to the same *genre* as do the criticisms of Hinduism by the missionaries of 1813 to about 1910. There is no evidence that Dayananda had any understanding, philosophical or historical, either of Islarn or of Christianity. But his advocacy of Vedism was no less unhistorical; and his presentation of Carvaka, Jainism and Buddhism no less a caricature.[426]

(d) Gandhi's denunciation of Western civilisation as satanic was based on no deeper understanding of the intellectual history of that civilisation and its concerns.

(x) The concepts that dominated in both the streams the perceiving of India were separated from the historical contexts in which they arose, and from their underlying methods of inquiry into the human condition. This concealed the assumption that, independent of history altogether, those concepts had the power to explain and change human disorder anywhere. The fact that the concepts both of liberal individualism and Marxism, while correcting some disorders of thinking and living, had produced numerous other disorders of their own which had claimed millions of human lives in the violence that followed, was simply ignored. With the exception of Vivekananda and Gandhi, the Hindu stream generally ignored the disorders of Indian society, which had done great violence to the individual. Nor did it, even when those were mentioned, inquire into their historical and intellectual causes. It was assumed that they would disappear if only the people learnt how great Indian civilisation has been. What

425 See the second, corrected, edition, first published in 1874, with a preface by him (Vedic Yantralaya, Ajrner, 1966; 34th printing), chapters, or samullasa, 13 & 14, pp. 444-98 and pp. 499-560 respectively.

426 *Ibid, pp.* 380-7 on Charvaka; pp. 387-392, on Buddhism; and pp. 408-37 on *Jainism*

was ignored, above all, in both the streams, was that in traditional Indian method of inquiry, concepts were not frozen in some mysterious timelessness, nor was human reality frozen in the perceptions of it. In modem India they were.

(xi) That the reality of Indian life and the modem perceptions of it have, for large parts, remained practically two separate domains, without one influencing the other, is proved by the failure of social legislation in India. Most of it has remained only in the statute book.

(xii) In very large measure that is due to an Indian disorder of many centuries, arising from the deadening ritualism of Indian life, Vivekananda had scorned so bitterly-divorce of meaning from form, of ideas from social practice, of belief from conduct. But there has been also a long tradition, from the *Mahabharata* to the *bhakti* saints, of the Indian struggle against that very disorder. It is only rarely that the problem itself enters the Indian perceptions of Indian society. When it does, the problem is either seen as another aspect of medieval, irrational, traditionalism; or is quickly passed over. Meanwhile Indian bureaucracy develops within itself the same disorder and is mesmerised by the power of ritualistic acts. The Indian political system is no less free from this disorder.

(xiii) There have been numerous Western thinkers, from Schopenhauer (1788-1860) to David Bohm today, who asked what the West might learn from India. In fact that tradition goes back to the Greeks. On the reverse question: what India may learn from the West, there have been in the past one century and a half two opposing main answers. India has everything to learn from the modem West: India has nothing to learn from the West; rather, it must unlearn what it acquired from the West during the colonial days. There are middle perceptions between the two extremes. Vivekananda maintained that the day India refused to learn from others, and coined the word *mlechcha,* it was doomed. India must learn from the West,

he concluded, social organisation and social concerns, not its religion, nor its materialism. According to the advocates of Westernisation, India must learn, besides, the Western sciences, rationalism, principles of social and economic order, the idea of progress, and materialist welfare, raising the standards of living through modem industry and technology. Gandhi, and Golwalkar, maintained that India had nothing to learn from the West. They reject Western civilisation as a whole. India must turn to its own principles, *satya* and *ahimsa,* and village republics, according to Gandhi; and, according to Golwalkar, to the living reality of *Hindu-rastra,* to the idea of one centre of legislation and governance, and to the world mission of the Hindus which Destiny has laid upon it. Deendayal Upadliyaya maintains, much like Vivekananda, that learning from others is a process of life, but a society, like an individual, learns in harmony with its own historical needs, a process that must sharply be distinguished from a mindless emulation of other histories. But, generally with the exception of Vivekananda and Upadliyaya, the opposing perceptions in this regard are based neither on a systematic understanding of the West nor of India. The debate obscures the real issues between the two and for the most part remains empty.

(xiv) It is undeniable that British rule, and through it the civilisation of the West, challenged India with what on first sight seemed like a new language. By 'language' I mean the totality of concepts and sensibility of a people with which, in the course of their history, they have ordered their individual and collective life: it is their mode of perceiving man and the world. The primary concepts of Western language are: history, person, responsibility, necessity, anarchy, conflict, law, the State, the Church, pre-determination, divine providence, contingency, progress, authority, equality and freedom. All these, including much of the concept of the Church as in the Buddhist Sangha, were already part of Dharmic language. Its history

has been the history of the issue between anarchy and order, necessity and freedom, the individual as a self-determined being and as dependent on the divine will, atheism or non-theism and theism, relativism and absolutism, human endeavour and Fate, history and circularity of time, the functionality of social order and its ethical basis, the material basis of life and the spiritual destiny of man. What in the Western encounter with India had seemed to be a new language was, in fact, something with which Indian society had been intimately familiar. Nothing of Indian society could ever have been intelligible until the Dharmic thinking on those questions that had occupied Western thought had first been grasped as much in its general structure as its tone and feeling.

(xv) By the time Europe's encounter with Indian society began, the latter had already had a long history of disorder, in the sense in which disorder was understood in Dharmic tradition itself---excess, *ati,* and lack of balance, both of thought and act. That same disorder was manifest in those very centuries of European history which were also the centuries of Europe's encounter with India.

(xvi) But whereas those disorders of Indian society were parts of human life, as natural to it as the underlying order of life, *dharma;* the disorders introduced into Indian society by the modem Indian perceptions of India, have been caused mostly by a careless adoption of arbitrary definitions of the West, to which Indian reality would not respond. The word 'religion' is introduced; it is assumed that there is something called 'Hinduism'; Hinduism is defined as a religion; and Indian civilisation, rooted in Hinduism, is seen as religious civilisation, world-denying, other-worldly. Then, social disorders are seen as religious disorders, or, simply, disorders of Hinduism. In this logic, if the social disorders are to be removed, what must first be removed from public realm is religion. Hence the battle cry: 'secularism!' These misconceptions are not even profound. They

arose from plainly wrong definitions and their application to Indian society. Therefore, when Bhimrao Ambedkar declared that he would 'put Hinduism on trial', and the accused was called, none came forth. The accused did not exist.

(xvii) The framework in which India has been perceived in modern times by the Indians is that of one-sided assumptions and wrong definitions. Everything in this framework is fragmented-economics from ethics, ethics from politics, and politics from the deeper meaning of human freedom. It can neither explain nor change Indian society. For it is far removed from the life-force, with its varied expressions, its *dharma* and *adharma,* that move the people of India, like men and women everywhere else.

(xviii) That the others can misunderstand you is too well-known. That you can misunderstand your own self is seldom recognised. Of the two, which is more harmful?

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The key concept which will enable us to grasp the truth about India is the concept of Dharma. Dharma is that which sustains life and order in all their forms, cosmic, human, animal and divine. It is a secular concept in the sense that it arises from no alleged divine revelation but from a study of the human person in all the dimensions of human existence (which are certainly not merely material). The concept of Dharma is not religious or anti-religious; it is secular. But, and here confusion begins to multiply even within India, the word Dharma has been used to embody the western concept of "religion", and therefore secularity has been understood to be anti-Dharmic. But the confusion originates in the West, where the concept of "religion" (from a Christian point of view a very suspect concept) was used to explain what the invaders found in India.

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